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For Immediate Release. No 01/98 Monday 5 January 1998

PENDLE NEEDS NURSES SAYS MP

A £1.2 million nationwide advertising campaign starting today signals the beginning of a year of opportunity for the nursing professions, says local MP Gordon Prentice.

The campaign follows publication of the Government's recent White Paper **The New NHS,** which proposes a groundbreaking role for nurses in NHS decision-making. The advertisements will particularly target young people about to choose careers, giving them an insight into nurses' everyday work, with its challenges and opportunities.

The MP said: "Nursing is a great career and the new Government recognises the key contribution nurses and midwives make to the NHS. The NHS was created fifty years ago this year and we want to give nurses the chance to lead rather than follow the future direction of the NHS."

"The recent White Paper on the NHS marked a turning point for nurses, giving them the opportunity to join GPs in leading family health services for the first time in the NHS' history. They will also run NHS Direct, the nurse-led round the clock national help and advice line."

Note to Editors: The campaign Nursing - Have You Got What It Takes? starts its second phase this week, with advertisements running in national newspapers plus magazines for young women, men and ethnic minorities. The first phase of the campaign last year prompted 16,000 enquiries, 50 per cent more than the number expected. The second phase will mix existing advertisements with new ones for midwifery and nursing older people.

For Immediate Release. No 02/98 Saturday 3 January 1998

MP STEPS UP CAMPAIGN TO PERMIT THE MEDICAL USE OF CANNABIS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is stepping up his long running campaign to persuade the Government to allow cannabis to be prescribed by doctors. His move comes in the wake of the publicity concerning Home Secretary Jack Straw whose son was found dealing in the drug.

Speaking from his constituency office earlier today, the MP said: "Like everyone else I feel very sorry for Jack and for his son. It must be a terrible ordeal for them both to go through. However, thousands of people already take the drug not for recreational reasons but because they believe it helps them cope with a medical condition which does not respond to conventional drugs."

The MP continued: "Because it is illegal for doctors to prescribe cannabis these people have to rely on dealers who may be peddling cannabis of indifferent quality. It could be adulterated in some way. They are forced to behave as criminals - buying on the streets a drug they should be able to get from their doctor. The obvious answer is to legalise cannabis for medical use."

"Unfortunately, life is not so simple. On the Radio 4 Today programme today (Saturday) Jack said there is nothing to stop people who claim cannabis has therapeutic value applying for a Home Office licence to test the drug. However, we have a ludicrous chicken and egg situation where the Government won't reschedule cannabis from schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Act (a controlled drug with no therapeutic value) to schedule 2 (a prescribable drug with therapeutic value) until it can be shown cannabis has a medical use. But to satisfy Jack, large scale trials are needed using a standard prescription or controlled dose of the drug and that

more follows

can't easily be done without the active involvement of the pharmaceutical companies who have so far been very reluctant to touch cannabis because of its schedule 1 label. People whose ill health has made them turn to

cannabis face risks. Conventional drugs have to be manufactured to a +5%/-5% quality standard. This obviously doesn't apply on the streets. Someone buying street cannabis has no idea what he or she is getting."

The MP added: "I am told there are three licenses currently in force where cannabis is being tested for medical use. Where do the doctors get their cannabis? Are they pharmacologists as well as doctors? What research studies have been published in the medical journals as a result of the research sanctioned by the Home Office? Has it been peer reviewed? Has the BMA's view - in which it recognises the therapeutic value of cannabis - made any difference to the Government's thinking? If not, why not?"

On 8 December, the MP joined Grimsby MP, Austin Mitchell, and leading neurologists and other clinical academics in a round table meeting with Health Minister Paul Boetang. The meeting followed the publication by the British Medical Association of a report which argues for the legalisation of cannabinoids - or cannabis derivatives - which it says have medical uses.

Note to Editors: The following article written by the Pendle MP appeared in the Independent on Sunday on 5 October 1997:

In July this year the British Medical Association voted overwhelmingly for cannabis products to be made available for medical use, if this happens it will simply return us to the position which applied before 1973, when the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act came into force, outlawing medical use of the drug.

Before then doctors could prescribe cannabis which was often dispensed in tincture form, like cough mixture.

Later this month the BMA's Board of Science will, it is believed, recommend wider use of the drug. This will reflect opinion within the profession which is moving sharply in favour of legalisation for medical use, The BMA magazine's Doctors Decide Panel of over 100 hospital doctors and GPs wants cannabis to be available on prescription. In an article in the BMA News Review earlier this year, 78 per cent of hospital doctors and three in five GPs agreed that the drug should be available for therapeutic purposes.

There is no doubt in my mind that cannabis and cannabis derivatives can help people cope with a variety of medical conditions.

The drug has for centuries been regarded as having therapeutic value even if, these days, its efficacy is challenged. There is masses of anecdotal evidence from people suffering from MS, for example, which backs the

more follows

claim that the drug really works. It can help reduce tremors and spasms and ease movement. Some people with Aids say it improves their appetite. It can help in the treatment of glaucoma.

Tragically, because its medical use is unlawful it makes research much more difficult than it need be because a special Home Office licence is needed for any drug trial.

Despite this, in 1995, the previous government was forced to lessen the controls on dronabinol, one of the active ingredients of cannabis, after the World Health Organisation recommended that this derivative had therapeutic value as an anti-emetic for patients undergoing chemotherapy for cancer.

The Misuse of Drugs Act puts cannabis in Schedule 1 - drugs subject to the strictest controls on the grounds that they have allegedly little or no medical value and cause social problems through misuse. Besides cannabis, the list includes LSD, mescaline, raw opium and coca leaf.

There is a powerful case for taking cannabis into the Schedule 2 list of controlled drugs with medical use, such as morphine, methadone and amphetamines, allowing qualified doctors lawfully to prescribe drugs that they believe will benefit patients.

Gordon PRENTICE is MP for Pendle in Lancashire and secretary of the All Party MS Group.

Note 2 to Editors: Last month, the Pendle MP asked the Home Office Minister George Howarth (1) how many applications have been made for a licence to research and trial the medical use of cannabis or cannabis derivatives; and on what date each licence was granted; (2) if he will list the individuals and organisations which have current licences from his Department permitting the research and trial of cannabis or cannabis derivatives for medical use.

Mr. George Howarth: According to existing records, a total of twenty two applications have been made for cannabis related research. All were granted and nineteen are currently valid. Of these, six are directly concerned with medical research. The licensee and date of grant of those six are as follows:

Dr. G. M. Stern, Middlesex Hospital--11 August 1988
Dr. P. Taylor, Bethlehem Hospital--27 February 1989
Dr. A. Holdcroft, Hammersmith Hospital--1 December 1994
Dr. R. Pertwee, University of Aberdeen--7 April 1974
Professor A. Smith, University of Oxford--1 August 1993
Mr. D. Todd, James Paget Hospital--1 May 1995.

The first three of these licences have now lapsed; the others remain in force.

For Immediate Release. No 03/98 Monday 5 January 1998

WHERE IS THE BEEF?

Ten million cans of beef will be available free to people claiming income-related benefits but the bids have to be in by 16 January says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from his constituency earlier today, the MP said: "This is a marvellous way of clearing the shelves of top quality beef but this annual give-away underlines just how bizarre are the workings of the system of agricultural support."

Cans of stewed steak will be available to Local Authorities, charitable and other non-profit organisations who apply to the
Intervention Board to distribute surplus beef under the EU Surplus Food Scheme. The beef was withdrawn from the market because of low prices.

The MP added: "The whole system needs to be put under the microscope. Even with the vast subsidies going into agriculture, the vast majority of hill farmers barely scrape a living from the soil. In is a sobering fact that 70% of farmers eligible for HLCA payments (Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance) and that includes many in Pendle have a net income of less than £10,000 a year."

Note to Editors: The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food writes: Successful applicants will be allocated an amount of beef based on an estimate of eligible recipients in their area. Complete application forms must be returned to the Intervention Board by 16 January.

Preference will be given to those organisations capable of distributing widely in their community. Organisations providing the beef in

the form of meals to their recipients will receive a double allocation.

The Surplus Food Scheme was introduced in 1987 to reduce surplus

more follows

WHERE IS THE BEEF?

intervention stocks and to contribute to the well-being of EU
citizens. To achieve this aim in the United Kingdom eligibility has been limited to those on Income Support, Family Credit,
Jobseekers Allowance (income based only) or Disability Working Allowance, the homeless and those living in welfare hostels.

The United Kingdom's allocation from the European Commission for the 1998 Scheme is £20.3m (29,190,000 ECU)

Intervention beef must comply with the same detailed specifications as other meat sold for human consumption. Meat from bovine
animals over 30 months at slaughter may not be sold into intervention.

As in previous years, the beef will be available in the form of canned stewed steak only. 5. Completed application forms are due at
the Intervention Board by 16 January 1998. Explanatory leaflets and application forms may be obtained from:-

The Surplus Food Scheme

The Agriculture Departments

C/o Intervention Board Executive Agency

PO Box 69

Reading

RG1 3YD

For Immediate Release. No 04/98 Monday 5 January 1998

PRENTICE WELCOMES NEW HOTLINE TO NAME AND SHAME DEFIANT DIRECTORS - CALL 0845 6013546

A new hotline to catch defiant directors and undischarged bankrupts who blatantly disregard disqualification orders made against them, has been launched by Nigel Griffiths, Competition and Consumer Affairs Minister. Over the last three months more than 250 directors have been banned by the courts from running companies.

The initiative has been warmly welcomed by local MP Gordon Prentice who he has confronted a number of rogue company directors in the Pendle area over the years.

The move coincides with the release of the latest quarterly disqualification statistics which details some cases of unfit conduct by directors including bouncing over 520 cheques, falsifying management accounts and deliberately misleading the liquidator.

The hotline will be open 24 hours a day and enable people to pass information on about defiant directors and bankrupts.

The Pendle MP commented: "Legislation designed to protect the public from directors who are guilty of corporate misconduct and undischarged bankrupts who are automatically disqualified has to be effective. It is astonishing that the threat of up to two years in prison and a £5,000 fine for breaching an Order is ignored by some people who blithely carry on as if nothing has happened."

Note to Editors: The Official Receiver becomes liquidator when a company is compulsorily wound up by the court. He/she has a duty under the Insolvency Act 1986 to investigate the causes of the failure and
report misconduct under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986. Insolvency practitioners acting as voluntary liquidators, administrative receivers and administrators have a duty to report unfit conduct to The Insolvency Service.

For Immediate Release. No 06/98 Tuesday 13 January 1998

NEW EMPHASIS ON THE THREE R's

Education Secretary David Blunkett today announced a shake-up of the National Curriculum to ensure a minimum of an hour a day each for the basics of literacy and numeracy.

The basics will have top priority within primary schools but schools must continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum requirements for science, IT and religious education will remain unchanged, but there will be greater flexibility in other non-core subjects. Children from the higher-ability range will not be held back by today's changes.

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice said: "Too many of our children are currently failing in school because they are unable to read and write properly. This means they are unable to reach their full potential in all the subject areas later on in life - including the arts and science."

David Blunkett added: "The new focus on the basics in primary schools reflects our commitment to focus on the three R's. The Government regards literacy and numeracy as fundamental to education and life."

The initiative builds on the measures already taken to cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year-olds, by using money saved from the assisted places scheme, and replacing bureaucratic nursery vouchers with a new partnership to deliver early years places for every four year-old. Under the previous Government nearly half of all 11 year-olds in England failed to reach expected levels for their age in Maths and English in 1996.

For Immediate Release. No 07/98 Tuesday 13 January 1998

MP HAILS START OF HOUSE OF LORDS REFORM

Pendle MP has welcomed moves announced today to radically reform the upper House of Parliament. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "At long last we are going to see the end of the peers - about a couple of centuries overdue!"

"The idea that people are here in Parliament because of who their father was is simply absurd. All Members of Parliament should be elected and be accountable."

Today sees the first meeting of the ministerial sub-committee looking at reform of the House of Lords, under the chairmanship of the Lord Chancellor.

The MP added: "This begins the process of fulfilling Labour's election pledge to remove the voting rights of hereditary peers as the first step in reform of the upper chamber. All issues of reform will be up for discussion as part of the process to modernise our democracy by equipping it with a Parliament fit for the 21st Century."

For Immediate Release. No 08/98 Tuesday 13 January 1998

PRENTICE BACKS MOVES TO PROTECT VALUABLE GROUNDWATER AGAINST POLLUTION

Moves to give groundwater added protection from pollution by dangerous substances have been welcomed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP was speaking at Westminster as the Government launched a three month consultation on the proposal.

The proposed Regulations are designed to implement the "polluter pays" principle. Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, said: "Groundwater is an increasingly important source of good quality drinking water, as well as a vital element of our environment. There has been concern for a number of years that the incorrect use and disposal of certain substances could lead to pollution of groundwater. To meet these concerns we have reviewed our legislation and have decided to consult on new Groundwater Regulations designed to provide additional protection for groundwater."

"These proposals are based firmly on the 'polluter pays' principle and are designed to prevent careless use and disposal of substances which could pollute groundwater. However, it is not our intention to penalise those who work in line with good practice."

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, added: "Some local farmers in Pendle have expressed concern to me about the possible impact on their farming activities. Farmers live on the surface of the same planet as the rest of us and they know the important of good, clean water. I want to hear from them if they are still worried after they have had a look at the consultation paper."

For Immediate Release. No 09/98 Wednesday 14 January 1998

AITKEN SHOULD PAY HIS OWN COURT BILL - NOT THE REST OF US SAYS PENDLE MP

Taxpayers should not have to pay for the collapsed legal action brought by Tory former cabinet minister says local MP, Gordon Prentice. Jonathan Aitken, an MP said today.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "Mr Aitken's libel action against the Guardian newspaper and Granada TV, came to more than £12,600 and the British public has borne the cost. Aitken paid only £150 towards court fees. It is absolutely outrageous.

The former Conservative cabinet minister lost his Thanet South seat in last year's general election. He faces a police investigation into allegations of perverting the course of justice and that he lied on oath in the High Court, as well as an estimated £1.8 million legal bill.

In his Commons motion the MP declared that "public funds should not carry any part of the cost of a libel action which is then discontinued by the plaintiff". The Government, he said, should "end the practice of public money being used to subsidise wealthy litigants".

For Immediate Release. No 11/98 Wednesday 14 January 1998

GOVERNMENT PLEDGES ACTION ON AIR POLLUTION

A new report on the effects of air pollution should galvanise us into action on this deadly hazard says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The report by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants confirms that air pollution has an effect on frail and ill people in the community. It suggests that between 12,000 and 24,000 deaths each year may be brought forward by air pollution.

Commenting on the report, the MP said: "The findings confirm the importance of our National Air Quality Strategy. Under the strategy regulations have been made to improve local air quality. Local authorities must now review and assess local air quality and introduce action plans to meet air quality objectives."

The MP added: "The Government has also recently announced changes in the way information on pollution levels is reported. This will help people with illnesses such as asthma manage their condition better."

For Immediate Release. No 12/98 Wednesday 14 January 1998

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the Government's plans for a new Food Standards Agency, independent of Whitehall, but answerable to Health Secretary, Frank Dobson.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This initiative puts the consumer at the heart of the Government's food policy and is a measure that is long overdue. Pendle has not escaped food poisoning dramas and we all remember the e coli outbreak in December 1996. It was a much less virulent strain than the one that caused the tragic deaths in Wishaw but it was alarming nonetheless."

The MP said that since the passage of the 1990 Food Safety Act deaths from food poisoning more than doubled from 94 in 1990 to 203 in 1995 coupled with a five fold increase in E Coli 0157 outbreaks.

"This new agency will set tough guidelines for food safety standards. In nutritional terms the food standards agency will not tell people what to eat but provide clear and unambiguous advice. It has been established to help consumers make informed choices. It's overriding priority will be consumer protection."

The MP added: "The record of the previous Government on food safety was hard to swallow. In fact with listeria, salmonella, e coli and BSE it was enough to make anyone choke."

For Immediate Release. No 13/98 Thursday 15 January 1998

MP BACKS PLAN TO BOOST THE REGIONS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says the Government's plans to set up Regional Development Agencies in every English region will give a much needed boost to local enterprise. The Regional Development
Agencies (RDAs) Bill was debated in the Commons yesterday.

The Pendle MP said: "In terms of GDP per capita, North West comes in at 89% of the European Union average. This is way below most other regions in the UK. We have the skills and enterprise here to do much better."

Regions Minister, Dick Caborn, said: "The success of the UK in improving its economic performance and its competitiveness depends on the success of every region."

The Pendle MP added: ""The new Regional Development Agencies provide the framework for addressing the economic deficit between the regions of the UK and demonstrate the Government's commitment to decentralisation."

Gross Domestic Product per capita as a percentage of the EU average

East Midlands	94
Eastern	94
London	147
North East Region	83
North West	**89**
South East	101
South West	94
West Midlands	91
Yorkshire/Humberside	88

For Immediate Release. No 14/98 Thursday 15 January 1998

MANUFACTURING HIT BY STRONG £ SAYS MP

Manufacturing industry risks being damaged by the strength of sterling says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. Last year the pound increased in value against the D Mark by 21%, against the Yen by 16%, the ECU by 16% and against the US dollar by 5%.

In the Commons this afternoon the MP told Treasury Minister Helen Liddell that the appreciation of the pound sterling was hitting local firms. He revealed that 44% of employees in his Pendle constituency work in manufacturing - a sector more dependent on exports than most service industries - compared with the national average of 19%.

The Minister said she understood the concerns of manufacturing firms but said a stable macro economic framework was the best guarantee of future prosperity. Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "Manufacturing is very dependent on exports. Its prices in sterling and its profits are being cut to keep market share. But this cannot go on for ever."

Note to Editors: Pendle ranks 12th in terms of UK constituencies with the highest percentage of employees working in manufacturing.

Birmingham Northfield	63.4%
Stoke on Trent North	51.6%
Wolverhampton NE	50.1%
Stoke on Trent South	48.0%
Coventry NW	47.1%
Wolverhampton SE	46.7%
Aberavon	46.3%
Amber Valley	46.1%
Blaenau Gwent	45.8%
Walsall North	45.2%
Central Fife	45.1%
PENDLE	44.3%

For Immediate Release. No 15/98 Monday 19 January 1998

MP TO MEET PENDLE FARMERS' LOBBY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting Pendle farmers tomorrow (Tuesday) when the NFU lobbies Parliament. Farmers are angry that agricultural prices have nose-dived and that the beef ban is still in place. The MP says he is sympathetic to the farmers' plight but says the Government inherited a "poisoned chalice" when it won the election last year.

Speaking from Westminster before his meeting with the farmers the MP said: "Farmers have had a difficult time what with BSE and all the food scares but we are working flat out to get the beef ban lifted. The European Commission has now approved a proposal for the scheme which will allow beef exports from Northern Ireland to resume. This is a useful start. This will allow the export of de-boned beef from cattle aged 6-30 months from herds certified as free from BSE for eight years. I hope it can soon be extended to the rest of the UK."

The MP added: "I know from speaking to Pendle farmers that we need to address a whole range of issues. Dairy farmers are worried about the fall in milk prices. And hill farmers are, as ever, struggling to make a living from incomes barely above subsistence level. The new Government is grappling with an appalling legacy of 18 years of Tory Government."

Note to Editor: The export of beef from animals from herds certified as having no association with BSE is one of five steps or schemes laid down in the Agreement reached at the Florence Council in June 1996 which would permit the gradual lifting of the export ban. Cattle must be aged 6-30 months; whose life history and movements are recorded on an official computer database and come from herds certified as having no association with BSE for at least 8 years. The cattle and meat will be traceable back to the herd of origin; animal slaughter and beef cutting and processing will take place in plants dedicated for that purpose; and all stages in the process will be subject to strict controls and veterinary supervision.

For Immediate Release. No 16/98 Monday 19 January 1998

MP RAISES DOUBTS ABOUT GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says he has grave doubts about the increasing availability of genetically modified foods.

He says at the very least there must be comprehensive labelling which would allow shoppers to make up their own minds about whether or not to buy.

The MP intends to raise the issue this Thursday (23 January) when he is down to quiz the Agriculture Minister on the issue.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Science is racing ahead at breakneck speed and I think we need to pause for breath and discover where this new technology is leading us. At the moment is looks benign but nature has a way of biting back as BSE demonstrates."

The MP added: "Scientists, for example, have now found the gene that causes browning in many fruits and vegetables and by disrupting the gene they have produced a low browning potato so it can stay longer on the supermarket shelf. They

have identified the genes which make fruit stay firm which will save on spoilage during transportation. And so it goes on."

"One of the more astonishing discoveries is the gene which will grow designer jeans! American scientists have been able to insert the blue pigment genes into cotton to produce plants which are naturally blue. There will be need to dye denim jeans."

For Immediate Release. No 17/98 Tuesday 20 January 1998

MP CALLS FOR AN END TO SECRECY ON "TAX BREAKS FOR ACCESS"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is renewing his campaign to force the Government to publish the names of people who get tax breaks running into millions of pounds in return for allowing the public access to their land. The catch is the identity of the individuals is secret and the access arrangement are rarely well publicised.

The MP will be joining fellow Labour MP, Paddy Tipping, at 12 noon on Tuesday 27 January for a Westminster ramble from the HQ of the Ramblers Association in Great Smith Street to the Treasury offices of Dawn Primarolo, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

They will present a list of land and properties exempt from inheritance tax because the public allegedly has access - but about which the public knows nothing. The list has been compiled by the Channel 4 Dispatches programme who broadcast an expose of the scam last November.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I have been banging on about this tax loophole for years. It can be worth a fortune to some wealthy landowners who take the rest of us, and the Inland Revenue, for complete idiots."

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP served on the Committee stage of the Finance Bill in 1996 when he called on the then Government to close the loopholes which allowed wealthy people to escape paying Inheritance Tax. Wealthy landowners get exemption from paying Inheritance Tax if they allow public access yet there is no requirement to publicise that access. In Lancashire six land owning individuals have been given this exemption - their identity is secret.

For Immediate Release. No 18/98 Tuesday 20 January 1998

GOVERNMENT TO GIVE GO-AHEAD TO 20mph ZONES

The Government is set to give the go-ahead for a new system of 20mph zones by this summer according to Roads Minister Baroness Hayman. The Minister told local MP Gordon Prentice there were practical problems to be overcome in introducing the new limit but she said she would like highway authorities to be given greater discretion in designating 20mph zones.

The MP had contacted the Minister after receiving representations from his local council.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is good news. Speeding traffic in residential areas is a big problem. Clearly 20mph is inappropriate for every road but for some roads it would make sense."

Note to Editors: Letter from Roads Minister to the Pendle MP dated 13 January 1998: "Thank you for your letter of 19 December to Gavin Strang enclosing this one from the Chief Executive of Pendle Borough Council about 20 mph zones.

I have no doubt that 20 mph may be a suitable speed limit in some urban areas. However, experience indicates that simply posting 20 mph speed limit signs has little effect on traffic speeds. Vehicle speed monitoring shows that over 70% of car drivers exceed the 30 mph limit nationally. If drivers cannot be persuaded to comply with the posted limit of 30 mph, it is difficult to think they would voluntarily obey a 20 mph limit on similar roads unless forced to do so.

This is why 20 mph zones invariably incorporate traffic calming features. However, I should like highway authorities to be given greater discretion in making 20 mph speed limits, and my officials are currently examining how that can be done without seriously compromising their success in reducing pedestrian casualties. This is not a straightforward matter, but I expect there to be a new system of making 20 mph speed limits in operation by the summer.

more follows

GOVERNMENT TO GIVE GO-AHEAD TO 20mph ZONES

Letter from the Chief Executive of Pendle Council to the Minister for Transport

Dear Mr. Strang,

20 mph, ZONES

I have previously written to the Department on behalf of the Council to request that the rules governing the introduction of 20 mph. zones be relaxed so that such zones can be declared without the need to undertake expensive traffic calming measures.

The Department has replied that whilst 20 mph zones had proved particularly effective at reducing accidents, deaths and the severity of injuries, their success was due to the use of traffic calming measures which physically limited vehicle speed. Whilst the Department are currently looking at ways to make it easier for authorities to install such measures its advice remained that 20 mph- speed limits were ineffective in the absence of speed reducing features.

My Council has considered the issue at some length and remains of the opinion that 20 mph would be the safe limit in built up areas with a 30 mph limit on primary routes. The council believes that local authorities should have more scope and discretion to introduce such measures which would be a useful part of an integrated transport policy as well as helping to reduce accidents.

I have been asked to put forward these points to you and also to invite you to make a visit to the Borough so that you can see at first hand how such limits could benefit road users and residents.

I look forward to hearing from you.

For Immediate Release. No 19/98 Wednesday 21 January 1998

MP FAILS IN BID TO JOIN LABOUR'S POLICY FORUM

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has failed in his bid to be elected to the Labour Party's National Policy Forum as one of the nine representatives of the Parliamentary Labour Party. The MP came 11th out of 27. Speaking at Westminster after the ballot result the MP said: "The delegation represents a good spread of opinion from within the PLP and I know it will do a first rate job for us on the National Policy Forum."

Clive SOLEY	votes 239	rank 1
Anne CAMPBELL	222	2
Helen JACKSON	208	3
Charles CLARKE	189	4
Rosie WINTERTON	179	5
Hazel BLEARS	152	6
Mike GAPES	151	7
Alice MAHON	140	8
Alan JOHNSON	137	9
Jacqui SMITH	128	10
Gordon PRENTICE	126	11
Hugh BAYLEY	117	12
Roger BERRY	106	13
Colin PICKTHALL	103	14
Maria FYFE	85	15
Harry BARNES	79	16
Phyllis STARKEY	75	17
Audrey WISE	75	18
John CRYER	74	19
Lynne JONES	68	20
Martin SALTER	66	21
Debra SHIPLEY	49	22
Bill RAMMELL	45	23
Geraint DAVIES	40	24
Julia DROWN	34	25
Nick PALMER	26	26
Nigel BEARD	21	27

For Immediate Release. No 20/98 Tuesday 20 January 1998

GOVERNMENT PLAYS FAIR WITH PENDLE'SPLAYING FIELDS

Pendle's playing fields are now safe for the future says local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP was speaking following the announcement that the Government will implement its pledge to stop the sale of playing fields which schools and communities need.

The MP added: "The previous Government happily presided over a system which forced schools and local authorities to sell off playing fields to raise extra cash. This harmed the country's sporting future and discouraged a whole generation of young people from developing their sporting talent."

"The new measures will provide a rigorous test for every application to sell or develop a playing field and give Ministers the power to intervene in cases where local interests are not fully considered. We now have a Government which is playing fair with our playing fields."

New legislation will require all state schools to seek the Secretary of State's consent for the sale of playing fields. Tighter planning controls will be issued and adjudication powers over disputes on all local authority owned playing fields where the English Sports Council advises against the proposals will be established.

For Immediate Release. No 21/98 WEDNESDAY 21 January 1998

GOVERNMENT TO RAISE HOSPITAL STANDARDS

A new National Performance Framework will drive up standards in the National Health Service.

Health Minister Alan Milburn said today that poor performance in hospitals will not be tolerated. For the first time, the NHS will measure, publish and compare itself on what matters to patients, doctors, nurses and health managers. If performance is poor, the new Commission for Health Improvement will have the power to help raise local standards.

There are huge discrepancies in standards between hospitals because of the Tories' internal market system. The costs of running one hospital can be four times higher than another.

The new performance framework will tackle those discrepancies. Like Labour's recent announcement on improving failing schools, this new initiative in health should be well received.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, added: "Wherever we live, we all want to see our local hospitals firing on all cylinders. This is just what the doctor ordered."

For Immediate Release. No 22/98 Thursday 22 January 1998

HEART DISEASE AND STROKE - THE MAJOR KILLERS IN EAST LANCASHIRE

"160 people in the East Lancashire Health Authority area died in the last two years from Coronary Heart Disease and stroke. That's why we need a major effort to reduce the threat they pose to people living in Pendle says local MP Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "When I asked people in Pendle to vote for me at the General Election, I promised we would make a major effort to improve standards of public health - to make our area a healthier place for all of us."

"'The Government is due to produce its new strategy to improve public health in the next few weeks. This will be in a new public health Green Paper, on which the Government will be asking for comments and views. I want to make sure that people here in Pendle have their say about what they think about the proposals, so that out health needs are reflected in the final plans that the Government puts forward. I'll be letting local people know what exactly is in the Green Paper and then asking people to write to me with their comments."

"One area where we need to concentrate our efforts is on the number of deaths from Coronary Heart Disease and stroke. Over the past two years, no fewer than 160 people in the area covered by East Lancashire Health Authority were killed by CHD and stroke. It needn't be like this. We need to get that number down. And we can get them down. That's one thing I'll be looking out for in the Green Paper when it comes out."

For Immediate Release. No 23/98 Thursday 22 January 1998

MP BACKS TOUGH ACTION TO TACKLE UNSCRUPULOUS IMMIGRATION ADVISERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing Government moves to take tough action against unscrupulous immigration advisers.

The plans which are being unveiled today say unregulated immigration advisers have for too long been costing the taxpayer thousands of pounds and causing suffering to the vulnerable.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Poor advice from bogus immigration advisers clogs up the immigration and asylum system with abusive and unfounded claims. As a result genuine claimants are losing out and the system wastes precious time and resources."

"The Government is committed to fairer and faster immigration controls and I hope people with an interest in this issue will respond to today's Home Office consultation paper on these so-called immigration experts."

For Immediate Release. No 24/98 Friday 23 January 1998

MP GETS DEBATE ON PUBLIC ACCESS TO LAND

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to take the battle for greater public access to land onto the floor of the House of Commons. Next Friday (30 January) the MP will use a special adjournment debate to press the Government to publish its long awaited consultation paper on access to the countryside.

The MP is backed by the Ramblers Association whose key players will be in the public gallery to hear him speak.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "I know the Minister responsible, Michael Meacher, is very sympathetic and I simply want to know what is causing the hold-up. The Minister told me in a written answer today that *"the Government plans to issue for consultation shortly its proposals for giving greater freedom for people to explore open countryside"*. This is excellent but we have all been waiting for months for this elusive consultation paper. I hope my debate spurs someone, somewhere into action."

Note to Editors: The MP also wants the Government to publish the names of people who get tax breaks running into millions of pounds in return for allowing public access to their land. The catch is the identity of the individuals is secret and the access arrangement are rarely well publicised.

The MP will be joining fellow Labour MP, Paddy Tipping, at 12 noon on Tuesday 27 January for a Westminster ramble from the HQ of the Ramblers Association in Great Smith Street to the Treasury offices of Dawn Primarolo, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. They will present a list of land and properties exempt from inheritance tax because the public allegedly has access - but about which the public knows nothing. The list has been compiled by the Channel 4 Dispatches programme who broadcast an expose of the scam last November.

For Immediate Release. No 25/98 Friday 23 January 1998

NORTH EAST LANCS TO GO DIGITAL THIS YEAR

Media Minister, Mark Fisher, yesterday confirmed that the new digital television transmissions will be beamed into East Lancashire later this year. Digital Terrestrial Television will allow very high quality wide screen transmission with sound as good as CDs. Digital Audio Radios have in-built display screens which will tell the listener what he or she is listening to - over and above the station ID.

The Winter Hill transmission site should broadcast from the launch of digital terrestrial transmissions scheduled for later this year and Pendle Forest will start transmitting within 16 months of the launch.

In the Commons last July, the Pendle MP was told that the new digital age would not pass Pendle by. The MP has been an energetic campaigner for the new technology, frequently insisting that his Pendle constituency should not become a technological backwater.

The MP commented: "It is very reassuring that Pendle will not be last in the queue. I want every square inch of Pendle to be covered. Everyone should get the new services."

Note to Editors: Media Minister Mark Fisher told the MP yesterday: The BBC and the Independent Television Commission (ITC) are responsible for planning the transmission of digital terrestrial television services. At present, plans are being formulated for the launch phase of digital television services from 81 transmission sites. I understand that the Winter Hill and Pendle Forest transmitters, which are both included in the 81 site plan, will provide digital terrestrial television services to North East Lancashire. However, the precise coverage will not be known before transmission actually begins.

Winter Hill should broadcast from the launch of digital terrestrial transmissions scheduled for later this year and Pendle Forest within 16 months of the launch.

more follows

NORTH EAST LANCS TO GO DIGITAL THIS YEAR

The BBC has already commenced the transmission of digital radio services, and estimates that its national radio services will reach 60% of the UK population from twenty seven transmitter sites. I understand these services are already available in significant parts of Lancashire. Increasing coverage, including the provision of services from the Pendle Forest relay, will be considered by the BBC as part of subsequent phases of development. The Radio Authority plans to advertise the national commercial digital radio multiplex in March and the projected speed of roll-out of the services it is to carry is one of the factors to be assessed in determining which applicant receives the licence. A local multiplex licence for Central Lancashire is scheduled to be advertised by the Radio Authority in January 2000.

For Immediate Release. No 26/98 Tuesday 27 January 1998

BATTLE LOOMS OVER DOMESTIC GAS SUPPLY AS MP URGES COMPANIES TO "PLAY FAIR"

Full competition in the supply of domestic gas to consumers in the north of England started in November last year but now, says Pendle MP Gordon Prentice, accusations are flying that some of the new companies are poaching customers from British Gas using underhand tactics.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today the MP said one constituent - who did not want to be identified to the press - had allegedly been asked by a doorstep caller to sign a piece of paper confirming that there was to be no change to the electricity supply company. In fact it was an authorisation for a switch in the gas supply from British Gas to another company - a new entrant into the gas supply market.

The MP said: "This may well be a one-off or it could be the tip of the iceberg. I am getting in touch with the company concerned to see what it has to say. But, in the meantime, my advice to everyone is only to sign documents where they are absolutely clear what they mean. People are free to stay with British Gas or they can move to one of the new suppliers - it is entirely their own choice. Clearly, no-one should be duped into switching."

Note to Editors: During 1994-97 competition in gas supply to the industrial and commercial market developed significantly. The opening of the domestic gas market started in the south west and south east of England covering 2.2 million consumers. This involved 14 new supply companies including several regional electricity companies such as SWEB and NORWEB. By August 1997, 21% of consumers in both regions had switched from British Gas to new suppliers. Gas market competition was extended to northern England and Scotland from November 1997 and it will be extended to the rest of England and Wales during 1998.

For Immediate Release. No 27/98 Monday 26 January 1998

MP CALLS FOR ABOLITION OF 'RIDICULOUS' QUEEN'S COUNSEL

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice is calling for the abolition of the "ridiculous" institution of Queen's Counsel in the British legal system. He says the way QCs are appointed is "all smoke and mirrors".

The MP has tabled Commons questions to the Government's Law Officers asking them to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the institution.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "We don't have Queen's Architects, Queen's Dentists, or Queen's Doctors - nor for that matter Queen's Solicitors. It just seems absolutely ludicrous that we have Queen's Counsel, but no-one seems to address this issue."

The MP added: "We do not need them. You do not have them in many other common law jurisdictions, where there is no artificial two-tier system like this which operates as a restraint of trade."

The MP said that other non-QC lawyers, who might be just as bright as QCs, did not get the prime briefs. "The way you become a QC is all smoke and mirrors. Certainly how QCs are appointed is not transparent. This certainly needs looking at."

Mr Prentice added: "It is something no one questions and yet if you stand back from it, it is ridiculous."

For Immediate Release. No 28/98 Thursday 29 January 1998

BOOST FOR BLIND CHILDREN IN PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the latest move by Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett to improve literacy standards with the announcement of an extra £247,000 for projects to improve literacy amongst blind children. Estimates from the RNIB say that there could be as many as 35 blind or visually impaired schoolchildren in Pendle.

Mr Blunkett said: "It is vitally important that blind children also reap the benefits of National Literacy Strategy and develop an enjoyment of reading that the National Year of Reading - launched today (Thursday) - envisages for everyone. This funding will allow the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the National Library for the Blind to take forward projects that are specifically designed to help address the difficulties that blind children encounter in learning to read braille or adapted print."

The Pendle MP added: "This is a splendid boost for blind and visually impaired children. It's great news."

Note to Editors: Approximately 12 pupils in 10,000 are blind or visually impaired. There are 18,000 schoolchildren in Pendle suggesting there might be around 20 visually impaired children. The RNIB estimates are higher (around 35). The projects will address the needs of blind children in a range of different ways. As a result of the funding we will be able to: • produce key primary school texts in

braille, which will enable blind children to play a full part in the Literacy Hour; • improve the range of curriculum and leisure reading materials, available to blind children - at present, blind children have access to only a fraction of the material available to sighted children; and • ensure that every school in the country which has a blind child needing modified text will be given an RNIB database giving details of all curriculum and other materials which are already available in non-print formats.

For Immediate Release. No 29/98 Tuesday 27 January 1998

MP BACKS MOVE TO PROTECT CHILDREN AT WORK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new Private Member's Bill promited by Gravesham MP, Chris Pond, which will protect the two million schoolchildren who work in Britain.

The Employment of Children Bill will have its second reading on Friday 13 February - an unlucky day says the Pendle MP for employers who exploit children or put them in danger.

The Pendle MP said: "Most adults are unaware of the scale of child labour or the danger it can pose to children's safety. Four out of every ten school children in this country have a part time job. But alarmingly, a third of those children are involved in an accident at work. And British children work more than their European counterparts - they make up one third of the total number of children working in Europe. But three quarters of British children are working illegally, because they have no work permit or are working illegal, often dangerous hours."

"The aim of this Bill is to make sure that children who do work are properly protected, work legally and in safety. Working can often give children their first taste of independence and responsibility. No one is trying to stop that. But children who work must be free from exploitation and physical danger."

"Under the present legislation, which was framed in 1933, children from the age of 13 can work for up to 17 or 20 hours each week. If you add a full school week, plus homework, some children are working 60-63 hours every week. Most adults would shrink from that workload. For vulnerable schoolchildren, those hours of working should be illegal in a civilised society."

"The Bill will ensure that children work no more than a maximum of two hours each schoolday and Sundays. Saturday jobs will not be affected unless a child is working for more than 12 hours per week. And there will be much more involvement from the children themselves, their parents and schools, local education authorities, employers and their insurance companies in making sure working children are properly protected. The Bill will reduce the hours many children work and tougher regulation will ensure that they work safely, free from exploitation and danger and without damage to their education."

The MP added: "The current legislation for children at work was framed at the time of the Great Depression, 65 years ago. It is time it was modernised for the 21st century."

Note to editors: It is currently illegal to employ a child below the age of 13: before 7am and after 7pm; for more than 2 hours on a schoolday or more than 2 hours on a Sunday and without an official work permit approved by the local authority.

In the North West 24% of children do a part time job during term time; 22% of children had a job during the last summer holidays; 57% of children did not have a part time job or worked during the last summer holidays; 14% of children work 7 days each week during term time; 19% of children have had an accident or injured themselves at work.

For Immediate Release. No 30/98 Wednesday 28 January 1998

MP BACKS MULTI-FAITH MILLENNIUM FOR PENDLE

Local MP Gordon Prentice today welcomed the publication of new advice recommending that the Millennium celebrations should reflect the significance of the year 2000 in Christian history as well as a shared period of reflection and celebration for people of all beliefs.

The MP was speaking following the publication of guidelines for Millennium event organisers published jointly by Culture Secretary Chris Smith, the churches and representatives of other faiths.

The MP said: "Here in Pendle people of all faiths will come together in the year 2000. It is an occasion for all of us - whatever our faiths and beliefs - to reflect on the past and look to the future with hope and confidence."

Note to Editors: On 21 January the Government together with Churches and representatives of other faiths published guidelines for Millennium Event organisers in a document "Marking the Millennium in a Multi Faith Context". This is available from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport on 0171 211 6265/6200.

For Immediate Release. No 31/98 Wednesday 28 January 1998

MP MEETS AEROSPACE CHIEFS IN FRESH BID TO PROMOTE THE INDUSTRY

Local MP Gordon Prentice and his Burnley colleague, Peter Pike, today met the Director General of the Society of British Aerospace Companies, David Marshall, to review the state of the industry and to chart a way forward, working with the new Labour Government.

Speaking after the meeting, The Pendle MP said: "We had lots to talk about given the key importance of aerospace in Pendle and Burnley. There are challenges coming up which we've got to face and opportunities which we must grasp."

"Britain is one of the three nations who are world leaders in aerospace and there is an estimated £60 billion of new business to be won over the next decade. I want the Government to be in there - working side by side with the industry."

Note to Editors: The SBAC is the trade association of the UK aerospace industry representing the interests of 350 companies across the whole spread of the industry. Its members account for 90% of the industry's £13 billion turnover.

For Immediate Release. No 32/98 Thursday 29 January 1998

MP BACKS ROAD TRAFFIC REDUCTION BILL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a Bill to tackle the harmful effects of the growth in road traffic. The Road Traffic Reduction (United Kingdom Targets) Bill, sponsored by Friends of the Earth, has its second reading in the House of Commons tomorrow (Friday). The Bill requires the Government either to set a target to reduce the overall level of traffic or to make an assessment of how Government policies as a whole will reduce road traffic.

The MP said: "We have got to tackle the growing problem of traffic pollution and congestion for the sake of people's health, the environment and the economy. Latest traffic forecasts predict that road traffic will increase by between a quarter and a half over the next twenty years. To allow such increases to go unchecked would damage the economy and the environment. We simply cannot go on building more and more roads to accommodate more and more traffic."

The MP added: "That is why the Government is committed to developing an integrated transport policy which encourages and enables people to use their cars less and to walk, cycle and use public transport more. We aim to publish a White Paper in may that will set the direction for transport for the new millennium."

"It is good news that the government and Friends of the Earth are backing this Bill. It shows the new Labour Government is taking the environment seriously."

For Immediate Release. No 33/98 Friday 30 January 1998

MP SAYS IT'S TIME TO ACT ON THE RIGHT TO ROAM

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice will today urge the Government to publish without further delay its long awaited consultation paper on access to the countryside. Labour has a long-standing commitment to give the public the right to roam freely over uncultivated open country.

Speaking at Westminster before his adjournment debate, the MP said: "All around my constituency in North East Lancashire there are countless square miles of beautiful open moorland which is out of bounds to the public. This cannot be justified and it must not be allowed to continue. Our new Government talks a language of rights and responsibilities and I am 100% behind this approach. The right of access must be accompanied by a duty to act responsibly. Delicate habitats must be protected. Birds must be allowed to nest. The countryside must be respected."

"For all its warm words, the Country Landowners Association has spent years blocking and frustrating attempts to secure greater public access. Voluntary access agreements with landowners, by which the CLA sets great store, simply do not work. We need legislation and we want it now."

The MP added: "I also want to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer publish a register, which would be open to the public, listing the location of the 189 sites across the country where landowners get complete exemption from inheritance tax if they allow public access to their land. Some do; many don't. The problem is the locations are secret! It's a real scam."

For Immediate Release. No 34/98 Monday 2 February 1998

NO MORE PRISON HULKS SAYS PRENTICE

Prisons Minister, Joyce Quinn, confirmed today that there will no more prison ships - despite a steadily increasing prison population.

The Minister told Pendle MP Gordon Prentice: "The Prison Service has only one ship. Her Majesty's Prison Weare, based at Portland. This ship was obtained as an exceptional measure to cope immediately with an unprecedented surge in the prison population."

The Minister added: "The Weare provides suitable accommodation equivalent to one medium-sized prison and thus helps to avoid costly and inappropriate use of police cells. However. there are no plans to use further prison ships."

The Pendle MP commented: "This is very reassuring. This prison hulk - where the cells are carpeted - was bought from the Americans by the previous Government and, at the time, was nothing more than a publicity gimmick."

"However, such is the relentless rise in the number of prisoners that we would need the equivalent of another 50 prison ships if the projections made last week by the Director General of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, come to pass. He says prison numbers could rise to 83,000 over the next seven years - double the 1992 figure. That's not far short of the total number of men, women and children in Pendle! This is simply unacceptable."

"Clearly, we've got to start getting the prison population down. Violent offenders need to be locked away to protect the rest of us but too many people are in prison who don't need to be."

For Immediate Release. No 35/98 Tuesday 3 February 1998

LOCAL MP WELCOMES ANTI DRINK DRIVE CONSULTATION (ruth)

Gordon Prentice MP has today welcomed the launch by Minister Transport Gavin Strang MP of 'Combating Drink-Driving - Ncxt Steps', a major public consultation document on n@w measures to combat drink-driving.

Speaking from Westminster the Labour MP said, " Too many people are killed and too many lives are ruincd by drink-driving. While drink-drive policy has b@n successful in reducing the numbff-r of deaths and injuries over the last thirty years, there has been no reduction in the last three years. One in sevcn fatal accidents still involves a driver over the legal limit."

11 The consultation document looks at a range of measures on enforcement, ptnalties, education, publicity and rthabilitation. By taking action on all these fronts we can hopefully make further progress in reducing the number of deaths and injuries."

Gordon Prentice finished by saying, "One of the options the Government is looking at is reducing the blood alcohol limit from 80mg per 100ml to 50mg. There is ff-vidence to suggest that a driver with blood alcohol between 50mg and 80rng is twice as likely to be involvtd in an accident as one who has not been drinking,"

(Ruths)

For Immediate Release. No 36/98 Tuesday 3 February 1998

JOBLESS FIGURES WILL ADD UP IN FUTURE says MP

The Labour Government will today honour its pledge to provide accurate figures on the real job rate says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP, while welcoming falls in unemployment in his Pendle constituency since last May's General Election, has always added the rider that the figures should be treated with caution.

Speaking from Westminster today, the MP said: "Labour's honest approach comes after years of the Tories fiddling the figures. Between 1979 and 1997 the Tories massaged the jobless count on no fewer than thirty occasions in order to artificially engineer a fall. Many thousands of people who were economically active and seeking work were prevented from signing on the unemployment register as the goal posts were repeatedly moved."

"The announcement, expected in a parliamentary written answer by Helen Liddell at 3.30pm today, is testament to Labour's commitment to provide a fuller picture of the labour market."

The MP added: "We need jobless figures we can trust and we need to get integrity back into the unemployment reporting system."

"Above all, the jobless figures have got to add up."

For Immediate Release. No 37/98 Tuesday 3 February 1998

MP WELCOMES IMPROVEMENTS IN SCHOOL STANDARDS

The first official report on school standards to be published under a Labour government shows that classroom achievement is getting better. The news has been welcomed by local MP Gordon Prentice who has given the report top marks - but he warns against complacency.

OFSTED found a marked improvement in both teaching quality and educational standards. The report shows the government will continue to improve educational standards year on year.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "The School Standards and Framework Bill, currently passing through Parliament, will further raise classroom achievement, showing that the government is delivering on its pledge to make education its number one priority."

The MP added: "Education is the key that unlocks the potential in every one of us."

For Immediate Release. No 38/98 Tuesday 3 February 1998

MP IN WELFARE REFORM SUMMIT

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice will be meeting Social Security Minister, Keith Bradley, at the Department's Richmond House HQ in London this afternoon to discuss the Government's welfare reform programme.

Speaking from Westminster before the meeting the Pendle MP said: "These consultations are just what the doctor ordered. We all recognise there have to be changes to the creaking and ramshackle social security system we inherited from the Tories - there is no argument about that at all. But we need to have a clear idea of where the Government is taking us."

The Pendle MP, who is secretary of the All Party MS Group, will be raising the whole question of disability benefits. "The Government has been floating the idea of reforming the DLA (Disabled Living Allowance) and I am keen to know more about the Minister's thinking."

The MP added: "It is good that we now have a national debate on welfare reform but we still need more information to make sense of it all. The welfare reform fact files published by the DSS last month were invaluable but there was little in the way of explanation as to why demand for some benefits had shot up and why take up for others was so poor."

For Immediate Release. No 39/98 Wednesday 4 February 1998

LOTTERY NEEDS PUBLIC CONFIDENCE SAYS MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing Culture Secretary Chris Smith who is insisting that public confidence in the National Lottery must be renewed.

Speaking from Westminster this afternoon following a Commons statement on the resignation of Peter Davis, the Director General of Oflot, the Pendle MP said it was right for the Lottery Regulator to fall on his sword.

The MP said: "The Lottery must survive and thrive. Our manifesto commitment is to seek an efficient not-for-profit operator to ensure that the maximum sums go to good causes."

The MP added: "The priority of the new regulator John Stoker, previously the Deputy Director General of Oflot, will be to ensure that the Lottery is managed with complete propriety."

For Immediate Release. No 40/98 Thursday 5 February 1998

MP WELCOMES NEW DEBATE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the national debate launched this week by John Prescott on how we can all make Britain greener - and richer - for future generations.

The Deputy Prime Minister warned it would not be easy. "What's needed is a complex mix of policies - not just environmental policies, but also social and economic policies as well. In the language of the experts, it's known as sustainable development'.

"I believe that the old '*environment vs. economy'* clash is no longer constructive. Surely the right approach is a fully connected one - as higher environmental standards will improve our overall economic performance. If companies use energy and raw materials more effectively, and produce less waste, it will be good for profits, as well as the environment. And making homes more energy efficient, as well as cutting pollution, will help millions of families who cannot afford to heat their homes."

"We need to produce what people want, but by using fewer resources. People need to think in new ways - not just about disposing of waste, or even how to recycle it, but reducing the amount created in the first place.

The Pendle MP added: "It is a sobering thought that every nine months we fill an area the size of Lake Windermere with household rubbish. I hope local people - and especially local schools - get involved in this debate. Copies of the consultation paper are free and we want to hear from you."

Note to Editors: Copies of the Sustainable Development Consultation document "Options for Change" are available from DETR Publications Despatch Centre, FREEPOST LON 7988 London SE8 5BR.

For Immediate Release. No 41/98 Monday 9 February 1998

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT SMITH+NEPHEW, BRIERFIELD, at 11.30am on Monday 9 February.

Local MP Gordon Prentice will be visiting the Brierfield site of Smith+Nephew, one of Pendle's major employers and pioneers in developing new medical fabrics.

The MP will be seeing the fruits of new investment in state of the art weaving machinery at the Brierfield site.

For Immediate Release. No 42/98 Monday 23 February 1998

KASHMIR AWARENESS WEEK GET UNDER WAY

Kashmir Awareness Week - a unique initiative pioneered by Pendle Borough Council - gets under way today in the presence of the family of the missing Kashmir hostage Paul Wells.

The series of events is designed - as the name suggests - to alert people here in Pendle and further afield to the struggle for freedom in Kashmir.

The awareness week ends next Sunday, 1 March, with a galaxy of speakers from Pendle and further afield. Amnesty International will be represented and local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be there along with his Burnley colleague, Peter Pike. Halifax MP, Alice Mahon, also hopes to get along.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "I think this is a marvellous initiative. Kashmir is the forgotten conflict which has been festering for half a century. Human rights abuses are commonplace yet the British media - with some honourable exceptions - ignores what is happening there."

"We need to get Kashmir onto the front page."

"I want to see a plebiscite in Kashmir to allow the people of that country to decide their own future."

Note to Editors: The dispute over Kashmir has triggered two of the three wars between Pakistan and India since independence in 1947.

For Immediate Release. No 43/98 Monday 9 February 1998

MP WELCOMES DRIVE TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

The Government's Green Paper on improving public health is a real shot in the arm for East Lancashire says Pendle MP Gordon Prentice - but, he says, it has one glaring omission. It says nothing about fluoridation.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP admitted that fluoridation is a contentious issue. "The East Lancashire Health Authority wants it. Many local councils are against it and North West Water seems to be ambivalent. Yet the fact remains that the dental health of our children in East Lancashire is the worst in England. We cannot close our eyes to that fact. The Government has a responsibility to address the issue."

The Government's strategy for public health - Our Healthier Nation - was published for consultation last week. The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, told the Commons: "Health in our country has generally improved over the years. But far too many people are still falling ill more often and dying sooner than they should. That's bad for the individuals concerned and their families. It's also bad for the country as a whole with 187 million working days lost to the economy through ill health every year."

"There are huge inequalities in our society. And the worst inequalities are in health. Poor people are ill more often and die sooner - the greatest inequality of all. Successive surveys have shown that over the last 20 years the gap between the rich and poor has been growing. For example, in the early 1970s there was scarcely any difference in the deaths from heart disease between men in social class 1 and men in social class V. Today, men in social class V are

more follows

MP WELCOMES DRIVE TO IMPROVE PUBIC HEALTH

three times more likely to be suffering from heart disease."

"Far too many people have been made ill by what they eat. Food poisoning has trebled in the last decade. We have already spelled out our detailed proposals for a Food Standards Agency. That will improve people's health."

"Having nowhere decent to live is bad for health. We are already tackling the problem of homelessness and bad housing. We have already released the first £900 million of the takings from the sale of council houses for investment in new and better housing. That will improve the health of the worst housed families.

"Low wages leave people without the money to buy decent food, warm clothes, or keep their homes warm in winter. That's bad for their health and for the health of their children. So the health of the worst off will improve when we introduce a National Minimum Wage."

"Being out of work makes people ill. It increases the incidence of

cancer, accidents and suicide. That's why our new deal to get people back to work using the money raised from the windfall tax will improve the health of the people who get the jobs."

"The huge increase in crime and disorder has damaged people's health and not just those who are actually assaulted. Living in fear makes people depressed and depression makes people ill in mind and body. Our crackdown on crime and disorder will help them feel more secure and so feel better."

"Air pollution makes people ill. It can make asthma worse - two million people in England now suffer from asthma badly enough to need regular medical supervision. Our transport policies to reduce traffic congestion and promote public transport will reduce pollution. That will improve people's health."

The Pendle MP added: "Here In North East Lancashire we have some of the worst health problems in the country. Having identified the causes of ill health we need to do what the doctor orders and get fighting fit again."

For Immediate Release. No 44/98 Monday 9 February 1998

MP BACKS JOBCENTRES MOVE TO BAN UPPER AGE LIMITS ON VACANCIES

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice is backing the Government's new move to ban upper age limits on vacancies at Job Centres as a way of combating age discrimination. The MP says it is a welcome step in the right direction but it does not go far enough. He says age discrimination in all its forms should be outlawed.

Prentice is backing a backbench bill on Age Discrimination which had its second reading in the Commons last week. He is disappointed the Government has not thrown its full weight behind the measure. Speaking during the debate, Jobs minister Andrew Smith said: " Unjustified age discrimination is morally wrong, makes no economic sense and is a grave injustice to those it affects. I welcome the move by the Employment Service to remove any reference to upper age limits its vacancy notices."

The Government is to proceed with a voluntary code of practice to combat unjustified age discrimination. The Minister added:
"A Code of Practice to which employers, both private and public, can sign up to offers the best way forward. I am not ruling out legislation in the future but we want to make progress now in combating age discrimination and the Code offer an opportunity to work with business and take to them the sound case for an age diverse workforce."

The Pendle MP added: "The Government is to give the voluntary approach a fair chance but I believe legislation will, in the end, be needed. By 2006 the largest group

of working age population - 24% or 8.6 million people will be between 55-64 years old. Older people have lots to offer."

For Immediate Release. No 45/98 Tuesday 10 February 1998

NEW BLUEPRINT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Government is set to introduce big changes which will alter the face of local government.

In a consultation paper published yesterday the Government sets out options set out for discussion including annual elections (already the case for Borough elections in Pendle), different days and ways of voting, elected mayors and strengthened powers for councils to lead their communities. Follow-up consultation papers will cover Best Value in service delivery, a new ethical framework for local government, and reform of council finance. The Government will publish its firm proposals in the summer.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "This is a splendid initiative. Local democracy is vitally important and its needs to be nourished and made relevant to local people's lives. We also need to identify clearly the responsibilities of each tier of Government. I find it irritating beyond belief when councils pass the buck when they should take responsibility for their own decisions."

Note to Editors: The consultation document published today, Local Democracy and Community Leadership, covers four broad areas: •modernising electoral arrangements to improve the accountability of councils and to increase participation in local elections, e.g. annual elections; electronic voting; rolling registers; new days and ways of voting; •developing new ways in which councils can listen to their communities and involve local people in their decisions, and in their policy planning and review, e.g. citizens' juries; focus groups; referendums; "techno-democracy"; •devising new ways of working for councils, giving them clearer political and management structures, e.g. executive mayors; cabinet systems; lead member systems; single party executive committees; and •strengthening councils' roles as leaders of their local communities, and giving councils the powers they need to meet community priorities and aspirations, e.g. community planning; new duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas; developing a scrutiny role. Closing date for comments is 9 April 1998.

For Immediate Release. No 46/98 Tuesday 10 February 1998

"DON'T FAKE IT!" says PRENTICE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for tough penalties for counterfeiters who, he alleges, have "nests" in the North West. The MP says the People who fake goods are undermining the genuine manufacturers and the threat goes beyond consumer goods such as perfumes and designer clothing. The MP fears that "safety critical" parts for aircraft and cars are also being counterfeited.

The MP said: "In recent weeks in the North West, the police have uncovered fake designer clothing destined for major High Street stores and not just markets. Counterfeiting is turning into a multi-million pound business."

DTI Minister, Nigel Griffiths, told the MP today he shared his concern about the trade in counterfeit goods but that the Government had not made an assessment of the extent of the problem in the North West.

The Minister said: "Trading Standards Officers and the Police are responsible for the enforcement of measures against the counterfeit trade. However, we are in regular contact with groups representing the interests of trade mark and copyright owners to ensure that the legal framework is supportive of their efforts."

From the 133 reports from Trading Standards Officers received for 1996/97, there were 217 successful prosecutions under the Trade Mark Acts 1994 - 41 being in the North West - and 91 successful prosecutions under the Copyright, Patents and Designs Act with the North West accounting for 17. No cases were reported involving automotive or aerospace parts.

For Immediate Release. No 47/98 Wednesday 11 February 1998

MP WELCOMES A FRESH START FOR THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice welcomed a new start for the National Lottery this week as its new watchdog, John Stoker, took over on Monday 9 February following the resignation of OFLOT Director General Peter Davis in the wake of Richard Branson's success in a libel case last week with GTech's Guy Snowden.

The MP also revealed new details of how Pendle has been faring in terms of lottery cash and the number of awards. The MP's research shows that Pendle has scored below neighbouring constituencies in the number of awards but does better when it comes to the value of the lottery awards. The MP commented: "When it comes to the cash dished out, Pendle is pretty much in the middle when all constituencies in the country are ranked alongside one another. But, naturally, we want to do better than this."

The Pendle MP said: "The National Lottery is now part of our lives. Lots of people play the lottery and it must retain the confidence of people in the way it is operated and regulated. That is why the Labour Government is committed to a People's Lottery and will seek an efficient not-for-profit operator to maximise returns for good causes when the current licence to run it expires."

"I am delighted that Lottery reforms will soon be discussed in the House of Commons where we will have a chance to support other changes to help small local organisations. These include an and to back-to-front distribution mechanism which encourages the best connected to apply for lottery cash. The Labour Government's reforms will also allow good cause money to be distributed on the basis of need. So I

will be working hard to get new lottery money into Pendle."
More follows

MP WELCOMES A NEW START FOR THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

The MP added: ""Lottery money will go to the Peoples' priorities. £1 billion will also be allocated to out-of-hours school clubs, healthy living centres, training in new technology for teachers and librarians as well as to a new National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts - Britain's first National Bank for Talent.

How Has Pendle Fared in the National Lottery?

Number of Lottery awards by Constituency and Good Cause (rank our of 658) Cumulative totals to 31 December 1997

Rank	Constituency	Arts	Charit-ies	Herit-age	Millennium Comm-ission	Sport	Total
361	Black-burn	9	12	2	-	4	27
337	Burn-ley	10	7	4	1	6	28
520	Pendle	5	6	3	-	5	19
400	Ribble Valley	6	10	2	-	7	25
89	Skipton and Ripon	33	10	4	2	10	59

Value of Lottery Awards by constituency and good cause. Cumulative total to 31 December 1997

Rank	Constituency	Arts	Charit-ies	Herit-age	Millennium Com-mission	Sport	Total £'000s
366	Black-burn	251	1,067	128	-	565	2,011
187	Burn-ley	185	471	172	1,776	1,711	4,316
331	Pendle	466	691	168	-	1,090	2,415
544	Ribble Valley	89	472	43	-	367	972
103	Skipton and Ripon	801	404	1,272	4,315	853	7,645

For Immediate Release. No 48/98 Wednesday 11 February 1998

PENDLE MP URGES PRIME MINISTER TO BRING IN A STATUTORY 'RIGHT TO ROAM'

In the Commons this afternoon Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, urged the Prime Minister Tony Blair to bring in a legal right to roam.

The MP referred the PM to an article written in the current issue of **Country Life** written by former Conservative Cabinet Minister, William Waldegrave.

Prentice told Blair that in an article in the glossy magazine the Tory grandee had predicted "direct action, civil disorder and civil disobedience" if Labour pressed ahead with legislation.

Speaking to a packed Commons, the Pendle MP pressed the Prime Minister to tell Waldegrave that these threats would "cut no ice" and that he would legislate.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "We are still waiting for the Government's definitive position to be made clear. A consultation paper is to be published shortly and it will set out two possible approaches - a statutory approach with all the usual safeguards - which is the one I favour - and a voluntary approach which, so far as I am concerned, simply will not work."

The MP added: "I haven't yet met a single Labour MP who is in favour of the voluntary approach. The demand to walk in open country is rooted in Labour's history. It is unfinished business."

Note to Editors: The MP is to table an Early Day Motion calling for a statutory right to roam. The MP is aiming to get the support of at least Labour 100 MPs.

For Immediate Release. No 49/98 Thursday 12 February 1998

PENDLE JOBLESS FIGURES

The number of people in Pendle out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance last month stood at 1,488 - a workforce rate of 4%. This is below the regional and national averages.

1,147 men were unemployed and 341 women. There were 395 unfilled vacancies at the Job Centre in Nelson and 208 at Colne.

Nationally, unemployment continues to fall. Yesterday's 12,300 fall in claimant unemployment takes the figure down to 1,399,000, 5.0% of the workforce.

Employment Minister, Andrew Smith, said: "It's good news that claimant unemployment has now fallen to its lowest level since July 1980. But there are some signs that the rate of fall might be starting to level off. Recent falls in claimant unemployment have averaged around 20-25,000 a month compared with around 30,000 in the Autumn and around 40,000 in the earlier part of last year.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, added: "From April we shall have more comprehensive and transparent labour market information on a monthly basis. The figures will go up - but they will more accurately reflect the true position. No more fiddled figures."

Note to Editors: Whilst the latest figures are the best for many years, unemployment remains high both by historical standards and in comparison with the United States and Japan. There are, for

example, still 118,000 18-24 year olds who have been out of work for 6 months or more. In 1965 when David Blunkett was an 18 year old, the number was 5,500.

For Immediate Release. No 50/98 Monday 16 February 1998

MP SHOCKED AT ALBERT HARTLEY JOB LOSSES

The sixty job losses announced by the Barnoldswick textile firm, Albert Hartley, has shocked local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP, who lives in the town, says the news came as a terrible blow although it was well known that imports and the strength of the pound had made things very difficult for the firm.

Speaking from Barnoldswick earlier today the MP said he would be pressing the Chancellor of the Exchequer to acknowledge the damage that the strong pound was doing to manufacturing firms.
Last year the pound increased in value against the D Mark by 21%, against the Yen by 16%, the ECU by 16% and against the US dollar by 5%.

In the Commons last month the MP told Treasury Minister Helen Liddell that the appreciation of the pound sterling was hitting local firms. He revealed that 44% of employees in his Pendle constituency work in manufacturing - a sector more dependent on exports than most service industries - compared with the national average of 19%. Speaking after the exchange the MP said manufacturing was very dependent on exports. "Profits are being cut to keep market share. But this cannot go on for ever."

For Immediate Release. No 51/98 Wednesday 18 February 1998

FUTURE OF HARTLEY HOSPITAL "UNCERTAIN"

The ambitious plan to convert the old Hartley Hospital in Colne into a model "retirement village" looks uncertain says local MP, Gordon Prentice. In a letter to Pendle Council's Chief Executive, the MP says the landmark building has a treasured place in the hearts of the people of Colne.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "People of all political persuasions and none have battled valiantly to retain this much loved old hospital in the hope that it could be converted into something useful to the town and something that would satisfy local needs. Tragically, it looks as if the owners of the building can only create their retirement village with the injection of large amounts of public money which, in present circumstances, must go to the areas of greatest need. The report on housing need which was sent to me by the Council sadly was unable to justify the expenditure of so much money in one location - at the expense of other areas in Pendle. I wish it were otherwise but that is the reality."

Note to Editors: The history of Hartley Hospital has been troubled ever since its closure in 1989. The Bradford and Northern Housing Association were seen at one stage as a possible partner in a new venture but nothing materialised. Hartley Hospital in Colne - left in perpetuity to the people of the town by the jam magnate, Sir William Pickles Hartley - was sold by the North West Regional Health Authority in 1994 to the builders and developers, Ribble Industrial Estates, for £325,000. The MP was involved in a long running battle with the then chairman of the North West Regional Health Authority, Sir Bruce Martin, to get details of the sale price and to force the disclosure of the identity of the mystery purchasers. The RHA eventually relented. The MP also pressed for sight of the valuation report following claims that the hospital had been sold for a song. The valuation report was classified "confidential" and was not published. Pendle's MP raised the issue of the future of the cherished hospital in a debate in the Commons on 17 March 1994.

For Immediate Release. No 53/98 Monday 16 February 1998

MP TELLS YOUNG PEOPLE IT'S TIME TO SPEAK OUT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told a gathering of young people from all over East Lancashire that they should tell us what their vision is for the future.

The MP was speaking yesterday at Accrington's Globe Centre at a one day conference designed to give the area's young people an opportunity to influence the development of East Lancashire over the next twenty years. Their views will be fed into a "policy makers' conference" on 24 February involving local authorities, employers and other major players in the area.

The conference heard that 63% of young people do not believe that school prepares them for the real world; that two out of three have been victims of crime by the age of 15 and only 2% feel identified with a political party.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "Change is happening all around us all the time and it is not something we should be afraid of. But I want to see young people getting involved and making their views count. A healthy democracy needs active and informed citizens."

"There is cynicism about the political process. And there is a very real concern about what East Lancashire will have to offer people in the future. Young people want jobs that are interesting and pay decent money. They want to live in an area that's vibrant and alive. I say to them that the future is in our own hands."

For Immediate Release. No 54/98 Tuesday 17 January 1998

MP CUT OFF

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has suffered the indignity of having his phone cut off.

Yesterday, Monday, the phones suddenly went dead at his constituency office in Nelson. The fax machine stopped. The phones were silent. The staff were left perplexed.

Speaking from his Westminster office (usually a phone call away) the MP mused: "BT tells me my phone lines have been cut through and the police don't have any leads. It is a complete mystery."

The MP added: "I would like the person who did this to call me and explain what the problem is. I hold regular surgeries and I am always available to see constituents with problems."

For Immediate Release. No 55/98 Thursday 19 February 1998

END IN SIGHT FOR MIXED SEX WARDS IN HOSPITALS

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice has hailed news from the Health Minister, Baroness Jay, that mixed sex accommodation in hospitals could soon be a thing of the past. The MP said that dignity and privacy demanded a speedy end to mixed sex wards which were "totally inappropriate".

The Minister said yesterday that the Government was making good progress but action was still needed to make sure every health authority moved quickly.

A report published yesterday shows that 70 per cent of all health authorities will have eliminated mixed sex accommodation by the end of 1999. By 2002, 95 per cent will have achieved targets for ensuring proper segregation of men and women.

The Minister said: "There are bound to be some hospitals where complete change may take more time for good reasons, such as the age of buildings or where Trusts are waiting for new buildings under PFI schemes."

"Single sex accommodation can also be a lower priority for operational reasons. For example, in intensive care or coronary care units, where high tech equipment is needed, and where many patients are too ill to be conscious of their surroundings. Or in admission wards where patients are being assessed."

Claire Rayner, Chair of the Patients' Association, said the Association had evidence that patients who felt strongly about their mixed-sex accommodation took longer to recover from treatment and operations.

For Immediate Release. No 56/98 Thursday 19 February 1998

GOVERNMENT WILL BRING DOWN WAITING LISTS SAYS PRENTICE

Hospital waiting list figures are due out today and local MP Gordon Prentice concedes it may be bad news but, he says, that's not unexpected. "NHS waiting lists

are like a super tanker - they take time to slow down, before bringing them to a halt and turning them around. But we are committed to reducing waiting lists."

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Tories left us with a Health Service that was sick through bureaucratic inefficiency. Restoring the NHS will not be achieved overnight. 18 years of neglect cannot be wholly transformed in 10 months."

"We said that NHS waiting lists will be shorter than the 1.1 million we inherited at the last election. We will deliver this promise over the lifetime of this government. From the moment we took office we made clear the top priority was for the NHS to avoid a winter crisis, even if this meant that waiting lists would rise. We found an extra £300 million for the NHS to cope with winter pressures. 1,500 separate projects have been funded this winter by using this £300 million in the most effective way possible."

Health Secretary Frank Dobson added: "We have allocated an extra £1.5 billion for the NHS. Millions are going into NHS dentistry to improve access and tackle oral health inequalities. We remain on course to meet our promise that by the end of March, no-one will be forced to wait more than 18 months for treatment."

For Immediate Release. No 57/98 Monday 23 February 1998

GOVERNMENT UNVEILS "RIGHT TO ROAM" CONSULTATION PAPER

Local MP Gordon Prentice is spearheading a major campaign in Parliament to give people the right to roam over open country. On Wednesday he is due to table an early Day Motion which will appear on the Commons Order Paper calling for greater access to the countryside. He is backed by over 120 Labour backbench MPs.

The EDM is timed to co-incide with the expected publication on Wednesday of the Government's long awaited consultation paper on access to the countryside. The green paper will set out two possible approaches - a statutory approach with safeguards, for example, to protect wildlife and sensitive areas and a voluntary approach which, the MP claims, "simply will not work".

The MP says: "I have a file as thick as my wrist with comments from members of the Country Landowners Association who are unremittingly hostility to the very idea of greater public access. Some of them think ramblers carry anthrax spores on the soles of their boots."

Note to Editors: The Early Day Motion reads: This House believes there should be a legal right of access to open countryside which would allow people to walk freely over uncultivated land subject always to restrictions safeguarding wildlife and flora and the legitimate economic interests of those working the land; believes that ownership by itself is not a sufficient reason to deny access and recognises that there is a widespread expectation that the Government intends to legislate to give the many this right denied to them by the few.

For Immediate Release. No 58/98 Tuesday 24 February 1998

HOUSING MINISTER VISITS PENDLE TODAY

Housing Minister, Hilary Armstrong, will be in Pendle today to see for herself the unique cocktail of problems and challenges facing the Borough. She will be meeting councillors from all parties as well as local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP said: "The council has put together a very useful programme for the Minister, taking in the Southfield Renewal Area and one or two other areas to give her some idea of the progress that has been made and the work that still needs to be done."

The MP added: "There will also be an opportunity for councillors to have a frank exchange of views with the Minister. Hilary already knows that housing is a key priority in North East Lancashire where we have some of the oldest and most run down housing in the entire country."

The Minister is expected to arrive at Nelson Town Hall at 10.30am. **Note to Editors:**
The 10 district councils with the highest percentage of their housing stock built before 1919

Rank	Council	Percentage
1	Hammersmith & Fulham	74.2%
2	Kensington & Chelsea	70.7%
3	**Pendle**	**67.2%**
4	Westminster	62.6%
5	Hyndburn	61.7%
6	Teesdale	60.8%
7	Eden	60.3%
8	Camden	58.5%
9	Islington	58.3%
10	Burnley	55.7%

For Immediate Release. No 59/98 Monday 23 February 1998

MP COOL ON SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

A drive to reclaim town and city centres from drunken yobs who harass and intimidate families and law-abiding citizens is being backed by Pendle MP Gordon Prentice. He is supporting moves by Home Office Minister George Howarth "to put the lid on yobbery".

Last Saturday, the Minister told the "Saturday Night Fever" Crime Concern Conference in London, that police, publicans, local authorities and magistrates should work in partnership with the Government to make towns and cities safer.

For some police forces alcohol-related violence and disorder is reported to be one of the most serious problems they face. Research from The 1996 British Crime Survey suggests that about one in six violent incidents take place in and around pubs - about 13,000 incidents a week.

The Pendle MP said: " The 1996 British Crime Survey shows that in 1995, 16.8 per cent of violent incidents took place in and around pubs - there were 680,000 of these incidents that year."

"Two measures included in the Crime and Disorder Bill which is currently before Parliament will help local authorities and police deal with drunken yobs. There will be a new statutory requirement for local authorities and police to develop crime prevention partnerships, involving voluntary groups, business and local residents, to find local solutions to local problems like alcohol-related disorder. Secondly, anti-social behaviour orders would allow local authorities and the police to seek a civil order from the courts to protect the community from individuals whose anti-social behaviour causes harassment, alarm or distress."

more follows

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

Note to Editors: Police and local authorities are being urged to make use of the legislation already on the statute books to deal with drunken anti-social behaviour. These include: the Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act, brought into force last summer and designed to allow police to confiscate alcohol from underage drinkers who are creating disorder; pub exclusion orders, introduced in 1980 but little used, ban offenders who have been found guilty of drunken violence in licensed premises; the Inebriates Act 1898 and the Licensing Act 1902 have been used by police in York to ban the sale of alcohol to habitual drunks; a model alcohol bylaw which local authorities can use to ban drinking in designated public places.

Local authorities issue public entertainment licences and magistrates issue liquor licences.

For Immediate Release. No 60/98 Monday 23 February 1998

MP WELCOMES MOVES TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN MOZAMBIQUE

Local MP Gordon Prentice has welcomed the decision by International Development Minister, Clare Short, to pump £7.75m into an innovative rural development programme in Mozambique, one of the world's poorest countries.

The programme will encourage farmers to produce a greater range of higher yielding, pest tolerant crops which will shorten the hungry period and encourage the production of surpluses for sale. The cash will also underwrite a scheme to provide loans to small farmers - at present there are no credit facilities available. The aid will also help communities to assert their legal rights over land they have traditionally used."

Clare Short said: "This programme clearly puts the principles of the White Paper on International Development into action. It aims to help meet the targets to eliminate poverty. It will help some of the world's poorest people to take control of their own future and establish sustainable livelihoods."

Local MP Gordon Prentice said: "We have our own problems here in Britain but they pale into insignificance when compared with the grinding poverty of Mozambique. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has recently allocated a further £10 million to help relieve the debt burden of Mozambique."

He added: "Mozambique is one of the world's poorest countries, with 60% of its people living in absolute poverty. Life expectancy is 36 years and 75% of women and 45% of men are illiterate."

For Immediate Release. No 63/98 Wednesday 25 February 1998

REVOLUTION IN LEARNING IS COMING SAYS MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says a revolution in learning is just around the corner. The MP was speaking today at Westminster as Education Secretary David Blunkett released a Green Paper on "lifelong learning".

The paper is the third key strand of Labour's education and employment strategy, following on from improved school standards and the New Deal for the unemployed.

It includes radical measures to transform learning, including a new University for Industry to make learning available at work, learning centres and at home; individual learning accounts to help people save for learning; an increase in standards and an extra 500,000 people for higher and further education by 2002; information and support for people who want to learn through a special freephone help line and a doubling of help for basic literacy and numeracy skills for adults.

The MP said: "Because fewer people have jobs for life, their learning needs to be topped up during their adult years."

He added: "This paper, the first comprehensive strategy for lifelong learning by any government, will bring education and training closer together. It is at the heart of Labour's belief in education as the key to building economic prosperity and social inclusion."

For Immediate Release. No 64/98 Wednesday 25 February 1998

MP BACKS "PENDLE YOUTH FOCUS - KICK START FOR JOBS"

Local MP Gordon Prentice has told the Government Office in Manchester that he is backing Pendle Partnership's bid for cash to help the area's young people.

The umbrella organisation "Pendle Partnership" brings together all the key players and is banking on success. The package of proposals will be considered alongside others as part of the SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) Challenge Fund Round 4 bid.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The final decision is, of course, taken by Government Ministers but the views of the Government Office North West on each bid are undoubtedly influential. I am keeping my fingers crossed that Pendle's bid comes up trumps. It is a good one and deserves to succeed."

The decisions will be announced by 23 March.

For Immediate Release. No 66/98 Monday 2 March 1998

MP WARNS OF CRISIS IN PRISONS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, that the prisons are bursting at the seams and that the present rate of growth of the prison population is unsustainable.

Speaking in the Commons this afternoon, the MP said the mid range Home Office projections for the growth in prison numbers is 83,000 - double the 1992 level. The worst case projection is 93,000 which would require up to 24 new prisons at a cost of £2 billion.

The MP told the Minister: "A high security inmate costs over £35,000 a year to keep behind bars and an ordinary prisoner half that amount, what is he doing to get the prison population down to European Union levels?"

The Home Secretary said: "Who is sent to prison and for how long is a matter for the courts. The Government is committed to implementing an effective sentencing system to ensure greater consistency and stricter punishment for serious repeat offenders and more effective use of community punishments for those who do not need to be imprisoned."

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP commented: "Crime doubled under the Conservatives and we are all paying the price. But locking more and more people away for longer and longer is not the answer in itself. If it goes on like this, we will need another windfall tax to pay for the new prisons! And that isn't on."

For Immediate Release. No 67/98 Monday 2 March 1998

KASHMIR AWARENESS CONFERENCE GETS HIGH PRAISE FROM MP

The Kashmir Awareness Week and its final day conference yesterday (Sunday) has been hailed a great success by the area's MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP told the meeting in Nelson's Civic Hall in Stanley Street that the was proud of the work Pendle Council had done to get the issue out in the open and discussed.

The MP said: "Kashmir is, de facto, a partitioned country whose people are suffering the most appalling human rights abuses. The Conference heard about recent traumatic events and listened to the father of the hostage Paul Wells whose disappearance has caused so much anguish particularly here in East Lancashire."

The MP continued: "I shall be pressing the Labour Government to address the issue using its Presidency of the European Union and as one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. We want to see an end to the bloodshed and for the Kashmiris to decide the future of their own country. A settlement imposed from outside simply will not work."

"My colleagues from Westminster, Peter Pike MP and Harry Cohen MP, made superb contributions and Mike Hindley MEP made a thought provoking speech. Councillors from other local authorities nationwide came to Pendle and offered their own perspectives. All the contributions, without exception, were powerful and compelling. All in all, it was a superbly informative event."

"Councillor Khalid Mehmood has been the powerhouse behind this initiative but people from every political party on Pendle Council gave the Awareness Week their active support."

For Immediate Release. No 69/98 Tuesday 3 March 1998

WATCH THAT CHILD

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed a new initiative launched by the DTI to distribute free safety information to parents about the potential dangers of household appliances.

Figures show that 10 children are admitted to hospital with serious burns every day while 11,000 people suffer burns and scalds each year.

A three-pronged plan to alert parents to the potential dangers in every household involves:

•Distributing two million free safety advice leaflets which provide the top-ten safety tips including basic first-aid advice; •Televising a new series of adverts dramatising the risks faced by toddlers at home and what parents can do to prevent accidents; •Launching a series of magazine articles showing where hazards can occur in the home and how to deal with them.

The advice shows a number of simple methods to help prevent children from being scalded or burnt by household goods including leaving the handles of pots and pans turned away from the edges of cookers and work surfaces and teaching toddlers not to play in the kitchen or bathroom and not leaving flexes for toddlers to reach.

The MP said: "A lot of this is simple common sense. Most parents are very watchful but these leaflets will refresh our minds to the dangers of household goods. It takes seconds for a child to get burnt - but the scars can last a lifetime."

For Immediate Release. No 70/98 Thursday 5 March 1998

MP CALLS FOR COMMISSION PAYMENTS TO BE REGULATED

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, wants companies to be able to justify to their auditors the payment of large commissions to third parties to secure export contracts. He told the Commons this afternoon that commissions can amount to 25% of the contract price involving millions of pounds.

The MP asked DTI Minister Barbara Roche if she shared his astonishment that the former Conservative Cabinet Minister, Jonathan Aitken, was back selling arms to the Middle East. He continued: "Is the Minister aware that commissions of 15% of the contract price are common place and 25% commissions are not unheard of. Vast sums of money paid to agents overseas can wash back into this country, lining the pockets of intermediaries."

The MP said new powers should be given to auditors to satisfy themselves that the scale of commissions is reasonable and their destination legitimate. He also wanted the recent Law Commission report on Corruption implemented quickly.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "No-one wants to disadvantage British business when it comes to securing export contracts but, as the Law Commission recognises, some of the things that go on are simply unjustifiable and unacceptable."

"The payment of commissions is a normal way of doing business and I am certainly not attacking the practice. But, at the extreme, it can shade into corruption and bribery. It is not just an issue for us here in Britain. The European Union is looking at it and so are the Americans."

more follows

COMMISSION PAYMENTS

Note to Editors: Law Commission Report 248. Legislating the Criminal Code: Corruption. On "normal business practice' the report has this to say:
"A number of respondents (to the Law Commission's earlier consultation) favoured a defence of "normal practice". Some expressed concern that British businesses might suffer a competitive disadvantage, given what the Institute of Directors described as "the different moralities of export markets" ... However we remain of the view that if the normality of conduct were a complete defence it would follow that, once corrupt practices had taken root in a corrupt environment, they could no longer be regarded as corrupt. We believe that if a transaction is essentially corrupt then it should be criminal however common such transactions may be."

For Immediate Release. No 71/98 Tuesday 3 March 1998

PENDLE MP SAYS FOX HUNTING MUST GO

Hunting foxes with hounds is a practice which should be relegated to the history books says local MP, Gordon Prentice. He was speaking at Westminster in the wake of the countryside march.

The MP said: "It was a "march" but not a "rally". There were no speeches for fear they would offend someone else on the march! People were rightly concerned about lots of issues but if the Countryside Alliance had wanted an unambiguous message to come from the March they would have limited its focus purely to a defence of hunting. Had they done so the turnout would have been nowhere so large."

"The hunting lobby say there will be enormous job losses if the blood sport is banned. But an independent study carried out by the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne and published last week concluded that the number of jobs directly dependent on hunting was just 900, and many of these jobs could be saved by a switch to drag hunting or other equestrian sports. Even in the extremely unlikely event of everyone of these jobs being lost this would amount to only 1.5% of the 60,000 jobs lost in farming in the last decade or a mere 0.4% of the 222,000 lost in mining."

The MP added: "Seven out of ten people are against setting hounds on foxes. With the vast majority of the public supporting a ban on hunting and 411 MPs having voted for it on 28 November, the only hope for the defenders of hunting has been to exploit Parliamentary procedure." The Bill has its report stage this Friday.

Note to Editors: A poll released today shows that 79 per cent of those attending the Countryside Rally on Sunday were Tory voters. The poll also showed that only half the marchers live in the middle of the countryside and fifteen per cent admitted to living in cities and towns.

For Immediate Release. No 72/98 Thursday 5 March 1998

COUNCILS MUST MEET THE BEST VALUE CHALLENGE

People will see local council services improve every year under proposals for a new "best value" scheme unveiled this week by Local Government Minister Hilary Armstrong. Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is sure councils will rise to the challenge.

The plans will deliver quality services at a price people are prepared to pay. Under the proposals published for consultation, councils will be obliged by law to ask local people what services they want, and report on how they have performed against targets. People will be able to compare the way their own and other councils perform.

Best value will revolutionise the way all councils deliver services. Star performers will get new credibility. Poor performers will have to brush up their act. Government will have new powers to

intervene where services don't come up to scratch. Councils will use all means, including competition, to ensure that quality services are provided, whether by the private or public sector.

Hilary Armstrong said: "Out goes the bureaucratic compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) regime - disliked by much of the private sector, many local authorities, and inadequate to deliver the scale of service improvement expected by council tax payers. In comes tough new Best Value, less red tape but a more rigorous regime, with more flexible ways of making sure that local people receive proper standards of services at a cost-effective price.

Note to Editors: Detailed proposals contained in the consultation paper Modernising local government - Improving local government through best value are:

standards of performance will be set for all council services. Some will be set locally and some nationally;

more follows

each year councils will have to review a proportion - around a quarter - of their services to see how they can improve performance. They will have to set themselves both short-term and long-term improvement targets at the end of each review;

as part of every service review, councils will:

- challenge the reason for providing a particular service to ensure that it is properly justified;

- consult local people through surveys and panels, and reflect employees' suggestions, about the quality and range of local services;

- compare the performance of their council with other local authorities of the same type;

- compete to show that a service is being delivered at a cost and to a standard that bears comparison with the best. Competition will play a key part in demonstrating that best value is being achieved;

Local auditors and inspectors will report annually to the council and to the public on how well councils are meeting best value requirements. Central government will have powers to intervene in serious cases where councils fall short of acceptable standards, refuse to consult people, shy away from competition or are just plain inefficient.

These powers will include a requirement for councils to make a specific improvement within a fixed time, put out a service to tender, accept the support of an external management team and, as a last resort, hand over a service to another authority or agency.

The best value framework will be underpinned by a legislative duty, codes of guidance from the Secretary of State and a revised set of performance indicators drawn up by the Audit Commission.

At present, under regulations under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988, Compulsory Competitive Tendering applies to a range of local authority services. A local council can only carry out certain defined activities in-house, through its own Direct Labour Organisation or Direct Service Organisation, if the work has first gone out to tender and been won in open competition.

On 2 June 1997 the Government announced its intention to replace compulsory competitive tendering with a duty of obtaining best value for the taxpayer as soon as Parliamentary time allowed.

For Immediate Release. No 73/98 Wednesday 4 March 1998

MP TO QUIZ LOCAL LANDOWNERS ON THEIR PLANS TO OPEN UP P

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to write to local landowners asking for details of their plans to voluntarily open up their moorland to public access. The Government published a consultation paper last month setting out options for a voluntary or statutory approach.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government has made it clear it wants to extend public access to mountain, moorland, heath, down and registered common land. It would exclude agricultural and developed land."

"The Government has not ruled out the voluntary approach to achieving greater access but the consultation paper makes it clear that this isn't the easy option. The amount of land offered up would have to be substantially the same as that likely to be covered should we have to legislate."

The MP added: "The consultation period runs until 5 June and I shall be writing in the first instance to two big local landowners to hear their proposals for opening up their land. Clearly, we all want to work in partnership with our local landowners."

Note to Editors: The Early Day Motion recently tabled by the Pendle MP attracted the support of over 160 Labour Backbenchers. It reads: "This House believes there should be a legal right of access to open countryside which would allow people to walk freely over uncultivated land subject always to restrictions safeguarding wildlife and flora and the legitimate economic interests of those working the land; believes that ownership by itself is not a sufficient reason to deny access and recognises that there is a widespread expectation that the Government intends to legislate to give the many this right denied to them by the few."

The MP is writing to the Duke of Westminster, Eaton Hall, Eccleston, Chester CH4 9ET and Lord Savile, Gryce Hall, Shelley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.

For Immediate Release. No 74/98 Thursday 5 March 1998

MP URGES GOVERNMENT TO MAKE TIME FOR FOX HUNTING BILL TO BECOME LAW

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged the Government to make time available if necessary to secure the passage of Michael Foster's Bill to ban fox hunting. He told the Leader of the House, Ann Taylor, this afternoon that there is a precedent set by the Murder (Abolition of the Death Penalty) Bill which was a Private Members' Bill steered through the House by his predecessor, Nelson and Colne MP, Sydney Silverman. Nelson and Colne is now part of the Pendle constituency.

Speaking from Westminster the night before the Foster Bill returns to the floor of the House of Commons, the MP said: "On 21 December 1964, Sydney Silverman's Bill to abolish hanging received a vote on second reading of 355 votes to 170. On that occasion the Government was not neutral and it made available nine Wednesday mornings to ensure the Bill was not talked out. In those days (unlike now) the House did not sit on Wednesday mornings. But, if we have the will to do it, there is nothing to stop us from using Tuesday or Thursday mornings when the Commons is not sitting. The Government would not lose any of its business."

The MP added: "We must do everything we can to get this Bill through. If it goes through the Commons but cannot get through the Lords then people will at least know who to blame!"

The MP added: "I remain convinced that, even if this Bill falls, hunting stags and foxes with hounds will be unlawful by the end of this Parliament. The Foster Bill received 411 votes at second reading with supporters from every political party. That shows the level of support."

For Immediate Release. No 75/98 Thursday 5 March 1998

LOCAL MP WELCOMES CIVIL JUSTICE AND LEGAL AID REFORMS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the publication of the government's plans to reform the Legal Aid and Civil Justice system, and to establish a Community Legal Service.

Speaking after the publication of the consultation document **"Access to Justice with Conditional Fees"**, the MP said: "Extending no win, no fee agreements to all civil cases will open up the courts to large numbers of people who are neither very rich nor very poor. Everyone in the middle - which means most people - cannot afford to exercise their legal rights and do not qualify for Legal Aid."

"The present system is slow, expensive, uncertain and unfair. We still have old-fashioned court procedures which only lawyers understand and which are frighteningly expensive."

The MP added: "I support the moves by the government to modernise civil justice and open up the courts to everyone."

The Pendle MP also welcomed the government"s decision to target Legal Aid saying: "Legal Aid expenditure has risen dramatically in recent years, but it is supporting fewer cases each year. It is vital that the government makes the best use of Legal Aid money. We cannot justify using Legal Aid resources to finance cases which can be paid for through no win, no fee agreements. There are many areas such as welfare benefits or employment disputes where there is not enough help."

"The government has already spent five months consulting about these proposals and has now produced a clear and detailed

more follows

LEGAL AID REFORMS

consultation paper. I would encourage everyone involved in the civil justice system to respond to this consultation paper and play their part in creating a civil justice system for the next century."

Notes to Editors: In 1990/91 Legal Aid cost the taxpayer £682 million. Over the next 6 years it rose to £1,477 million, an increase of 115%. Despite this rise, the number of people helped has fallen - by 9% in the last 4 years.

The previous government"s approach was to reduce eligibility limits so that fewer people qualified for Legal Aid and increase the contributions assisted parties had to pay. Thus even some people who only rely mainly on state benefits have an income which is too high for Legal Aid.

The Consultation Paper proposes extending "no win, no fee" arrangements to all types of civil litigation other than family cases. This will allow many more people of modest income with good claims to take their cases to court.

The government is also committed to developing Community Legal Services. Legal help provided by Community Legal Services will concentrate on delivering legal help to the poorer sections of society and will cover a much wider range of cases than are presently funded by Legal Aid. However, the government can only develop Community Legal Services if savings can be made from the money presently paid to lawyers in private practice through the Legal Aid fund.

The government therefore proposes to remove Legal Aid from personal injury cases where Ministers believe that no win no fee agreements will support good cases. It also suggests taking certain low priority categories out of Legal Aid such as boundary and inheritance disputes. The money used to fund Legal Aid for these cases would be better used for legal help with housing, employment, welfare rights, debts and other problems that face people on low incomes.

For the moment, the government is proposing to leave Legal Aid for medical negligence cases but to restrict cases to those lawyers specialising in the are (who are likely to have a better record of success for their clients).

For Immediate Release. No 76/98 Thursday 5 March 1998

MP DUBS SELL-OFF "THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY"

The report of the government's independent financial watchdog, the National Audit Office, is a damning indictment of the last Government's policy of rail privatisation. Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says the sell-off is a national scandal.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today the MP said: "The Tories' rush to sell off Britain's trains was a £l.1 billion rip-off for tax payers. The rolling stock leasing companies were sold off for just £l.8 billion. But the National Audit Office says that these companies were worth £2.9 billion."

"The previous Government had no interest in value for money. Their only objective was to secure the sale of the companies as quickly as possible, driven by their outdated ideology."

The National Audit Office report reveals a catalogue of failure by the Conservative Government. They did not carry out a comprehensive valuation, nor did they update the initial valuations that they had commissioned in 1994. There is also little written evidence that the Department gave detailed consideration to arrangements for Government clawback of profits from the sale of the companies.

The MP added: 'The Government's forthcoming White Paper on the Integrated Transport Strategy will address these issues, and will set up a strategic rail authority to help achieve a safe, efficient and affordable railway system, run in the public interest."

For Immediate Release. No 77/98 Tuesday 10 March 1998

FOX HUNTING ISSUE "WILL NOT GO AWAY"

This Friday (13 March) the Foster Bill which would ban hunting with hounds gets another airing in the House of Commons. It will almost certainly run out of Parliamentary time given the number of amendments tabled by Tory MPs. But, says Pendle MP Gordon Prentice, even if the Bill falls this time, the issue will not go away.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Fox hunting should be banned just like dog fighting, cock fighting and bear baiting. The Foster Bill may fail but the issue will not go away. When I visit local schools, I never find local schoolchildren pleading to keep fox hunting - quite the reverse!"

The MP added: "I want the Prime Minister to give a commitment on behalf of the Labour Government that, before the end of this Parliament, time will be made available for the will of the House of Commons on this issue to be given effect. 411 MPs voted to outlaw hunting with hounds yet arcane Parliamentary procedure torpedoed the Foster Bill. This surely cannot be allowed to stand."

Note to Editors: Frequently asked questions about foxes:

How do we control pest foxes? The best protection from predators for livestock such as free-range poultry is effective fencing. The RSPCA believes that, above all, humane methods should be used to control pest foxes. Where there is a proven problem, shooting at close range by a skilled shot is far more humane than the random pursuit and savaging by dogs of any fox which happens to be in the vicinity of the hunt. You do not have to declare war on a whole species because of individual fox problems. The problem of fox predation is frequently overstated, and the vast majority of lambs

losses are due to cold, exposure and poor management - not foxes. The best scientific estimates suggest that lamb losses to foxes are less than one lamb per sheep farm per year, compared to 23 per year from other causes (cold, still births, starvation, accidents etc).

more follows

FOX HUNTING ISSUE "WILL NOT GO AWAY"

Do many foxes suffer injuries at the hands of inaccurate shooting? There is little evidence that this is more than a rare occurrence. One can never guard against individuals recklessly injuring animals, but out of 1,693 sick and injured foxes collected by the RSPCA only one case was reported to have pellet injuries.

Does fox-hunting conserve hedgerows and coverts? There is a mistaken belief that many hedgerows are maintained to serve as obstacles for the hunt, and that small woodlands are maintained to provide sites for foxes to live and breed. Farmers are encouraged by Government to maintain hedgerows for the good of the countryside. The presence of organised hunting is completely unconnected. In a survey of 3,700 landowners, 'fox covert' was the least common reason given for retaining and planting small woods. There is no reason to believe that a ban on hunting would lead to the destruction of such features.

Can stag hunting with hounds be justified to conserve deer numbers? No. There are far more humane methods available. Culling of deer numbers is best done by a skilled marksman to minimise suffering. In Scotland, where stag hunting with hounds is banned, the deer population is managed by shooting. The cruelty of stag hunting is compounded in that the season (August to April) covers the period when many hinds are pregnant or have young with them.

Doesn't fox-hunting with hounds ensure a quick kill? First the chase is often lengthy. Stress alone causes suffering, and both horses and hounds can be injured in the course of the chase. The dogs will fight with the fox upon capture, with dogs disembowelling the fox by tearing open its underbelly. The image of one hound killing the fox instantly with a single bite to the neck is a myth. Also, many foxes are driven to ground followed by terriers trained to corner the fox or drive it from cover. Only then it is killed.

Wouldn't fox numbers escalate if foxhunting with hounds was made illegal? No. The total number of foxes killed by organised hunts is relatively small compared to the fox population. About 12,500 foxes are killed by hunts, compared to 100,000 killed by other means such as shooting. Naturally, the fox population will peak at about half a million in the summer months, and fall to half that figure in the winter. Fox numbers are largely self regulating, influenced like all wildlife by weather conditions, food supply and other natural factors. Indeed, the random killing of foxes and dispersal of family groups brings non-breeding vixens into breeding, thereby increasing numbers. Evidence suggests that fox populations can recover extremely quickly from losses as great as 70 per cent; the population being totally restored within one year. The evidence that organised hunting controls the fox population by killing significant numbers is not justified. Organised hunting with hounds remains an irrelevance in terms of pest control.

For Immediate Release. No 78/98 Monday 16 March 1998

MP HAILS CLEVELAND GUEST'S "DRAMATIC RECOVERY"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, last Friday (13 March) told a gathering of aerospace chiefs at Cleveland Guest's new factory on the Lomeshaye Industrial Estate in Nelson that the firm had made a dramatic recovery since "the dark days of 1994" when it was touch and go whether the famous engineering company would survive. The MP paid tribute to the Chief Executive, Steve Hollis, and his team for their success in turning things around.

Alice Guest, the widow of the founder of Cleveland Guest, formally opened the new £1.5m factory which will make components for the Brazilian 50 seater regional jet, the Embraer RJ145.

The MP said: "Steve Hollis and everyone at Cleveland Guest are to be congratulated on the work they have done in getting the company into such good shape. Prospects for aerospace are looking good and Pendle will benefit."

Note to Editors: Cleveland Guest, which called in the receiver on 23 November 1993, has gone from strength to strength since its rescue. The MP met the receivers in February 1994 to talk through the rescue package underwritten by Lancashire Enterprises and Nat West bank.

For Immediate Release. No 79/98 Tuesday 10 March 1998

GOVERNMENT RAISES HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN KASHMIR WITH EUROPEAN UNION PARTNERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging the Labour Government to tackle human rights abuses in Kashmir. His call for action follows the successful Kashmir Awareness Week in Pendle which sought to highlight the abuses largely forgotten by the world's media.

The MP asked Foreign Minister, Derek Fatchett, what stops he is taking to use the UK presidency of the European Union to draw attention to human rights abuses in Kashmir; and what initiatives he is proposing to help secure a settlement of the dispute.

The Minister replied: "We will work with EU partners to ensure that Kashmir is raised during the UN Commission on Human Rights. Our High Commissioner in New Delhi plans to lead a delegation of EU Troika missions to Kashmir in May. They will assess and report on the situation on the ground, including human rights problems. The Government continues to be willing to help find a solution but any offer of help must be acceptable to Pakistan and India."

The Pendle MP added: "We all want to break the log-jam on Kashmir and get things moving. It is good to know the UK Government is using its Presidency of the European Union to get our partner countries in the EU to address the issue."

For Immediate Release. No 80/98 Tuesday 10 March 1998

MP SAYS ABOLITION OF DUTY FREE SALES CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED

The planned abolition of duty free sales within the European Union cannot be justified at the present time says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

He will tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, at Treasury Questions on Thursday (12 March) that the end of duty free sales within the European Union on 1 July 1999 will cause chaos and job losses.

Speaking at Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "If duty free is axed in 1999 there will still be different tax rates in the various countries of the European Union. When the proposal was first thought up years ago, the European Commission was dreaming of harmonised tax rates across the EU. That hasn't happened yet - if it ever does. The reason for abolishing duty free is simply not there yet the proposal grinds on regardless of the reality."

The MP added: "There will still be duty free shops on ferries and at airports but only passengers travelling outside the European Union will be able to take advantage of them. For example, if you are travelling to Greece there will be no duty free. Travel to Turkey and you are OK. However, in some places duty free shops will inevitably close if the vast majority of travellers are going on to destinations within the European Union."

"I shall be urging the Chancellor to use the UK presidency of the EU to get a grip on this issue which matters a great deal to holidaymakers. At the very least, abolition of duty free should be postponed."

For Immediate Release. No 81/98 Thursday 1 March 1998

ROAD SAFETY RUTH

For Immediate Release. No 82/98 Tuesday 10 March 1998

MP CALLS FOR END TO VENDETTA AGAINST TRADERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says it is time to call a halt to the "vendetta" against shopkeepers who display signs and goods for sale outside their shops. The MP says the whole issue has spun out of control as councils crack down hard on errant traders.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "I want councils to take a sensible approach to this issue, but sometimes I feel common-sense has flown out of the window. Sometimes action is taken when goods are displayed on pavements a mile wide where people could pass easily. Pavements are already home to street furniture, benches, hydrants, pillar boxes, litter bins and phone boxes and much else besides. Councils should act where there is a clear and obvious obstruction to the highway."

The MP added: "The "wars of the A boards" are raging in East Lancashire. I am in touch with Ministers about getting a ceasefire and then, hopefully, a peaceful resolution to the dispute."

Note to Editors: Earlier today the MP asked Environment Minister Glenda Jackson what steps the Government is taking to ensure a consistent approach by local authorities towards the removal of obstructions such as goods for sale from pavements. The Minister replied: "Any thing placed on the

highway is capable of being deemed an obstruction that the highway authority is under a duty to have removed. The highway includes the pavement. Whether an offence is actually committed in a given case is however a matter to be proved. Case law has established that there must be proof that placing the thing in question on the highway is unreasonable. This depends on the circumstances of the particular case. The Government has concluded that these can vary to such a degree that it is not possible to offer meaningful detailed advice to local highway authorities on the exercise of their powers. But it encourages them to follow policies that place emphasis on the need to maintain unobstructed passage along the pavement for passers by, but also take account of the interests of shoppers and retailers.

For Immediate Release. No 83/98 Thursday 12 March 1998

PILOT PROJECTS TO HELP POOREST PENSIONERS

A pioneering programme to use Department of Social Security and local authority computer records to identify pensioners who are not claiming the Income Support they are entitled to has been welcomed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "About one million pensioners are not claiming the Income Support they are entitled to. We need to do all we can to get as close as possible to a
100% take up."

The MP added: "Most pensioners are on records for receiving the basic state pension or other social security benefits such as attendance allowance and housing or council tax benefit. The idea is simply to match the records to identify pensioners who could benefit from Income Support and are currently missing out."

Note to Editors: Glasgow, York, Preston, Stroud, Lambeth, East Renfrewshire, Torbay, Torfaen and South Staffordshire local
authorities have agreed to take part in the pilots which start next month and run for six months followed by a comprehensive evaluation of what they find. The study will give practical back-up to national research, commissioned by the Government, to find out why pensioners do not claim the benefit. The research started last October and will last a year.

For Immediate Release. No 84/98 Thursday 12 March 1998

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Pendle man, Joseph Sanderson, is lost for words. He used to be able to use his cordless phone when he was washing his car outside his house or when he was in the garden. In fact, he bought it for that reason.

Then along came Cable and Wireless who placed one of their green boxes outside his house and ever since his cordless phone has fallen silent as soon as he steps over his threshold..

Mr Sanderson, who wants Cable and Wireless to buy him a replacement phone that works, called his MP to see if he could sort things out. C&W says they are not to blame.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Letters have been flying back and forth for months but the company is digging in its heels. It seems like common-sense that if the cordless phone worked perfectly well before C&W planted it's green box outside Mr Sanderson's house and the phone doesn't work now, then the box is to blame."

He went on to say: "I would be very interested to hear from other constituents - if they can get through - who have come up against similar problems."

For Immediate Release. No 85/98 Tuesday 17 March 1998

GOVERNMENT MOVES TO MAKE WORK PAYSAYS PENDLE MP

Today's Budget - the first full Labour Budget in 19 years - will make work pay for millions of low paid workers, including thousands here in Pendle says local MP Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster as the Chancellor completed his Budget speech, the Pendle MP said: "Any family with a full time worker is now guaranteed take-home pay of at least £180 a week. And no family with earnings of less than £220 a week will pay any income tax at all."

"This is what we mean by the working families tax credit - allowing lower and middle income working families with children to keep more of what they earn. There will be a rolling programme of reform, eliminating the tax burden on working families with low incomes and making work pay. It is part and parcel of Labour's anti poverty strategy."

"The Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) will be fully implemented from October 1999, replacing Family Credit. It will provide £1.5 billion more in in-work support than Family Credit and will reach another 400,000 families with children. Family Credit is currently taken up by only 70% of those in work who are entitled to it."

The MP said: "This Budget starts the long overdue transformation of the tax benefit system. We want to make work worthwhile. There are tax cuts for all employees who pay National Insurance Contributions. A gain of over £65 a year. And employers will not have to pay National Insurance on any employees earning less than £81 per week."

more follows:

GOVERNMENT MOVES TO MAKE WORK PAY

"Child Benefit for the eldest child goes up £2.50p a week. Families with children will gain an average of £250 each year from this Budget. The poorest 20% of families with children will gain an average of £500 a year."

The MP continued: "Children and childcare are major themes of this Budget and a couple with two children and income below £17,000 a year will now receive 70% of

their eligible childcare costs. This will make a huge difference to many families. Indeed, the childcare tax credit will benefit families earning up to £30,000 a year.

"A couple earning £430 a week with two children and high childcare costs could receive over £50 a week from the tax credit."

The MP added: "In addition, the Chancellor has found an extra £500m for the NHS; an extra £250m for education and over £500m for public transport over the next three years. £50m has been earmarked specifically for rural transport and that is good news."

The MP concluded: "It is, of course, quite impossible to satisfy everyone's Budget expectations. There will be those disappointed at the increase in cigarette, beer and wine taxation."

"The new Government is implementing its programme step by step. Overall, it is a good Budget."

For Immediate Release. No 86/98 Monday 16 March 1998

NEW MOVES TO HELP DISABLED

New houses will in future have to be built with the needs of the disabled in mind says Pendle MP Gordon Prentice. This will bring homes into line with what already happens with new public and commercial buildings.

The MP said: "The changes, announced last week, are good news for people who, for one reason or another, have found it difficult to get into other people's homes or who have required expensive adaptations to their own new home. Clearly, these changes will take time to have effect but we are making a start now."

The MP continued: "We want home owners to be able to stay in their homes longer as their mobility decreases either through age or illness."

Note to Editors: Part M of the Building Regulations which covers access and facilities for disabled people is to be extended to cover new dwellings for the first time. Some of the measures to be included are: •level entry to the principal, or suitable alternative, entrance •entry wide enough to allow wheelchair access •WC provision on the entrance or first habitable storey •switches and socket outlets at appropriate heights •where a lift is provided in flats, a minimum lift capacity and dimensions will be recommended.

These changes will enable home owners to remain in their homes longer as their mobility decreases either through age or illness, to allow people to invite people with disabilities to visit them in their homes knowing that, for example, the doorway will be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair and that there is a toilet on either the ground floor or first habitable floor. It is estimated that more than 10 million people will benefit. In particular there will be direct benefits of increased convenience, accessibility and sociability for disabled people. The measures will also help those with temporary disability through accident or injury, the elderly and those with young children in prams and buggies.

For Immediate Release. No 87/98 Monday 16 March 1998

CLOCK WATCHING

British Summer Time begins at 1 am on Sunday 29 March when the clocks should be put foward one hour from 1 am Greenwich Mean Time.

Summer Time will end at 2 am on Sunday 25 October, when clocks should be put back to 1 am Greenwich Mean Time.

Arrangements for the following three years will be as follows:

1999: Summer Time begins on 28 March and ends on 31 October

2000: Summer Time begins on 26 March and ends on 29 October

2001: Summer Time begins on 25 March and ends on 28 October.

The Pendle MP is a staunch defender of Summer Time, resisting proposals in the past to scrap British Summertime and move over to Central European Time (CET).

Under CET daylight would break in some parts of Scotland at 11am and between 9am and 10am in many other parts of the country.

For Immediate Release. No 89/98 Tuesday 17 March 1998

BAN ON DANGEROUS FIREWORKS CUTS INJURIES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed new figures showing a reduction in injuries caused by dangerous fireworks following last year's ban on large bangers, flash bangers and aerial shells.

The measures, coupled with a high-profile campaign to educate the public on the potential dangers of fireworks, have led to:

• a 31% reduction in injuries caused by bangers (down from 273 injuries in 1996 to 189 injuries last year)

• a 28% reduction in injuries caused by rockets (down from 222 in 1996 to 158 last year)

• a 26% reduction in injuries caused by Roman Candles (down from 79 in 1996 to 58 last year)

Overall injuries caused by fireworks have also dropped by 26 per cent to 908, while instances of hooliganism involving fireworks have dropped by one-third to 256.

The figures released by Consumer Affairs Minister Nigel Griffiths this week, have been welcomed by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, as well as other interested groups.

The Pendle MP said: "Bonfire night should be enjoyed, not spent in a casualty department awaiting treatment - so these figures are very welcome news indeed. Too often what looks like harmless fireworks can be lethal in the wrong hands."

For Immediate Release. No 91/98 Wednesday 18 March 1998

THE BUDGET - WHO BENEFITS IN PENDLE?

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, writes: "The Budget is good news for all the people of Pendle. It is a Budget to make work pay, encourage enterprise, and gives families the support they need.

This is a Budget to make work pay. The tax cuts for all employees paying national insurance will make up to 25,198 people in Pendle better off by over £65 a year.

And help is going to 1,678 businesses in Pendle. The 1% cut in corporation tax to 30% and small business tax to 20%, and the measures to encourage long-term investment will make a difference.

This is also a Budget for fairness. Because of the new Working Families Tax Credit - cash paid through the tax system to low-paid families - families with a full-time worker will have a guaranteed minimum income of £18O a week, and you won't pay any income tax at all if you earn under £220 a week.

The £185 million extension of the New Deal is good news for the young people in Pendle who have been unemployed for over 6 months, providing new job opportunities for those previously denied them.

The rise in Child Benefit will also be welcomed. Child Benefit for the eldest child has been raised by £2.50 a week, making up to 12,300 families in Pendle at least £130 a year better off.

This is a government that recognises that balancing work and family responsibilities is a constant struggle. So the Budget has provided new help for child care through the tax system, With our new child care tax credit, working families will have up to 70% of their childcare costs paid for them by the government.

I know the people's ambitions are for better, schools and hospitals in Pendle, and that's Labour's ambition too. The Government has put an extra £250 million into our schools to cut class sizes - so a total of over £2.5 billion has already been set aside for education by this Government. And more cash has been put into the NHS to reduce waiting lists - a total of £2 billion for the NHS since we came to office.

For Immediate Release. No 92/98 Wednesday 18 March 1998

GOVERNMENT ACTS ON BROKEN BONES

One in two women will have broken a bone due to osteoporosis by the time they are seventy and the majority of fractures in those aged over 75 are the result of the disease according to local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Each year there are approximately 60,000 hip, 50,000 wrist and 40,000 vertebral fractures due to osteoporosis. Most of these occur in older women, but about 20 per cent of the hip fractures occur in men. It is a big problem."

The Pendle MP said: "Osteoporosis can lead to chronic disability and cut short healthy life expectancy but it is preventable and treatable. Bones matter!"

The Minister for Public Health, Tessa Jowell, has pledged Government action to tackle osteoporosis. The first step is a new user-friendly guide for GPs which is to be published in the summer. It will form part of a new strategy on osteoporosis which will be announced shortly and which will complement the guidelines on the clinical management of osteoporosis which are being drawn up by the Royal College of Physicians.

The guide will help GPs to: identify those at risk and those with established osteoporosis; identify secondary causes of osteoporosis; encourage lifestyle modification; choose and use long-term therapy for prevention and treatment; refer patients who need specialist diagnosis or management.

For Immediate Release. No 93/98 Wednesday 18 March 1998

MP SICK OF LIB DEM JIBES ON NHS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today accused Liberal Democrats of "opportunism" in their attacks on Labour's record on the NHS. The MP says they are closing their eyes to the vast sums of cash now going into the NHS. Earlier today, the Health Secretary announced an extra £500 million, earmarked to get NHS waiting lists down.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: 'The Lib Dems accuse us of penny pinching when it comes to the NHS, yet their infamously elastic "1p on income tax" has been spent in their imaginations a million times over. The Lib Dem penny seems to finance everything under the sun."

The MP continued: "The extra £500m comes on top of the £1.5 billion Labour has already put into the NHS. This means the government has more than doubled the amount the Tories were planning to spend. Clearly we cannot do everything overnight but to pretend we are doing nothing is being blind to reality. Today's £500m is not just a routine roll-out of a budget announcement but a significant milestone in the government's agenda for the NHS. We want new and better ways of running the health service, building on our reforms to dismantle the internal market, cut through red tape and target money where it is most needed."

The MP added: "It's about time the Lib Dems acted responsibly and gave the Government some credit. The Lib Dem's Treasury spokesperson Malcolm Bruce constantly criticises Labour for not fulfilling its pledges yet we have allocated an extra £2,000,000,000 for health since the election ten months ago."

For Immediate Release. No 94/98 Thursday 1 March 1998

DATE DATE DATE

Malcom Bruce yesterday called for an extra £2.25 billion in health yet the government has provided more than double the amount promised by the Liberal Democrats in their election manifesto.

The government has delivered significant and real increases in funding without imposing the income tax increases the Liberal Democrats were calling for.

After ten years of utter irresponsibility the Liberal Democrats should start to behave like a real political party and give credit where credit is due.

For Immediate Release. No 95/98 Tuesday 7 April 1998

PENDLE'S POUNDS HELP PAY OFF TANZANIAN DEBT

Postcards urging the Government to write off the debts of impoverished developing countries have been dropping through the letterbox of local MP Gordon Prentice - each with a £1 coin attached as a contribution.

Commenting on the cascade of cash, the MP said: "These postcards have been clanking through my letterbox with great regularity and my generous constituents will be delighted to know that every pound I receive goes straight to the Chancellor of the Exchequer who is using the money to reduce the debt of Tanzania - one of the most indebted countries in Africa."

The MP added: "I want to see these enormous debts to the West written down and, in many cases, written off completely. This would be a practical and positive way of helping some of the poorest countries on the face of the planet. Gordon Brown is doing his bit and people (and local churches) who send £1 coins to me or to Gordon Brown know exactly where the cash is going."

Note to Editors: The Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Helen Liddell, told the Pendle MP last week : Thank you for your letter of 27 February to Gordon Brown enclosing correspondence from your constituent Mrs X concerning the debts of poor countries, Your constituent enclosed £l to be used to reduce the debts of a poor country. Please. pass on my thanks to your constituent for this contribution, I can confirm that we have agreed with the Government of Tanzania that all sums received in this way by the Treasury will be used to reduce the debts owed to the UK by Tanzania. To date some £5,300 has been raised to this end,

As you may recall, I wrote to all colleagues on 7 October explaining how the Government intends to take forward its pledge to support new debt relief measures for the poorest countries, and giving some background on recent developments with regard to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which we continue to support.

PENDLE'S POUNDS HELP PAY OFF TANZANIAN DEBT

In that letter, I drew attention to the Chancellor's Mauritius Mandate statement on third world debt, including:

- his call for an international commitment that all eligible poor countries should at least have embarked on the process of securing a sustainable exit from their debt problems by the year 2000. Countries should get the maximum possible relief needed to ensure this;

- encouragement of debtor countries to adopt and adhere to sound economic policies to facilitate sustainable economic development, including open, transparent economic policies and a focus on basic health and education in their public spending;

- his appeal to the Paris Club of bilateral creditors to interpret its rules on debt relief more flexibly, so that Governments can do whatever is necessary to deliver debt sustainability for poor countries;

-his announcement that for the next two years, export credits provided by the UK to HIPC countries will only be used to supporting expenditures that contribute to economic and social development in these Countries.

Clare Short recently announced that DFID was to cancel up to £132 million in aid loans to middle-income Commonwealth countries, provided these countries were committed to *pro-poor* policies, transparent and accountable development and sound economic policies. Finally, I mentioned the important contribution that members of public were making by sending in money to help to write off debts owed to us by Tanzania.

Since October, the Government has continued to strive to fulfil the pledges that the Chancellor made in Mauritius. On 17 December, the Chancellor held a seminar on debt issues at No 11 Downing Street, with religious leaders and charity directors. The discussion covered many topics, notably the delay by the international community in granting full debt relief to Mozambique under the HIPC initiative.

The UK has since taken a clear lead on this issue. The Chancellor has written to Gl0 Finance ministers urging them to provide bilateral contributions to enable Mozambique's debt burden to be reduced to an affordable level. He announced last month that the UK would provide up to $10 million, on top of the debt relief through the Paris Club and the other assistance that it has already committed, to help Mozambique achieve debt sustainability in the hope that other creditors would follow their lead.

In its role as President of the G7, the Government has ensured that debt issues are on the agenda for the Birmingham summit, After the G7 meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors on 21 February, a statement was issued which both encouraged all poor countries identified under the HIPC initiative to embark on the process of securing debt relief by the year 2000 and agreed that future export credits to HIPCS should be used productively. This constitutes a significant step towards an international commitment on two of the targets that the Chancellor originally set down in the Mauritius Mandate.

For Immediate Release. No 101/98 Tuesday 7 April 1998

MP CALLS FOR "REPRIEVE" FOR EARBY TRAINING CENTRE

Earby Training Centre, which is facing closure, could get a stay of execution says local MP Gordon Prentice.

When details of the proposed closure hit the local press earlier this year the MP says his first reaction was one of shock and disbelief. "I remember very vividly the hope and enthusiasm the centre engendered when it opened - I was there - and the idea of closure after such a short period in operation is quite appalling. Any alternative, based in the Globe Centre over in Accrington, is simply a non starter."

"On the positive side, I understand a proposal from the East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council, ELTEC, is to be considered next month and this may secure the future of the Centre for a further two years. I certainly hope so."

"Earby people need - and are entitled to - access to high quality local training. That's the bottom line."

For Immediate Release. No 102/98 Tuesday 7 April 1998

HUGE PREMIUM BOND PRIZES UNCLAIMED IN LANCS

Over a million pounds in premium bond prizes lie unclaimed in Lancashire and Merseyside says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. He says more cash is waiting to be collected in the North West than in any other region in England outside Greater London.

Speaking from Westminster after ferreting out the figures, the MP said: "Nationally, there is over £15,800,000 in unclaimed prizes just waiting to be picked up. There are thousands of people sitting on a fortune and they don't realise it. In the area which includes Lancashire, Merseyside and the Isle of Man there is £1,100,000 in unclaimed prizes - well ahead of Yorkshire (North, South and West) and North Humberside with £830,000."

The MP added: "I want to see these prizes snapped up just as quickly as possible and I have asked the National Savings people to put the winning numbers on the Internet. They are going to post all winning numbers on the net in a searchable form as from next month and that is good news. At the moment people have to go to main Post Offices and wade through long lists of winning numbers."

Over the 40 year life of the Premium Bond scheme, the total value of prizes paid out has been £3.9 billion. The current amount unclaimed represents less than half of one percent of that total - but it still runs into millions.

Note to Editors: Premium Bond winners do not have to claim their prizes - National Savings automatically writes to all winners. However, there are times when Premium Bind holders move house and forget to notify national Savings of their new address. If not found after 18 months, the winning numbers are put on to National Savings "unclaimed prize" list which is updated quarterly and is held at main Post Offices.

For Immediate Release. No 103/98 Tuesday 7 April 1998

MP PUTS COSMETIC SURGERY CLINICS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice is pressing Health Ministers to introduce new regulations covering cosmetic surgery clinics.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "A doctor fresh out of medical school can call himself a cosmetic surgeon and set himself or herself up as such. More worryingly, the back up staff need not be medically qualified even though they may have an important role initially in advising people on whether a surgical procedure, such as a face lift, is required."

The MP added: "When people go along to a cosmetic surgery clinic they may feel quite vulnerable. As a matter of course, they should be made aware of the professional background and skills of those examining them. Press reports have alleged that non medically qualified people are routinely given a screening role in clinics. But, in reality, they are salespeople, selling an operation or procedure to the client - whether they really need it or not."

Health Minister, Paul Boetang, told the Pendle MP: "There is no specific requirement for staff (in cosmetic surgery clinics) to give information about their qualifications or experience. However, anyone who attempted to carry out a procedure or an examination that they were not competent to do could expose themselves to the risk of civil, and possibly criminal, liability, and/or to professional proceedings for misconduct."

The Pendle MP said: "You can't open a newspaper these days without seeing advertisements offering face lifts, nose jobs, ear pinning and everything in between."

For Immediate Release. No 104/98 Tuesday 7 April 1998

MP SEEKS ASSURANCES ON NORTH WEST TRAINS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is seeking assurances that train services in the North West are going to get better - just as the new owners pledge. Last week, local train services in Lancashire were taken over by the First Group plc who now run buses and trains in many parts of the country. On 30 March, the Franchising Director gave the go ahead to the bid by First Bus to take over Great Western holdings which ran train services in the South West and in the North West of England.

The Pendle MP said: "The Tories broke up the railway network and sold it for a song and we are now seeing regional monopolies emerging as private sector companies bid for and swallow up their neighbours."

The MP has pressed Government Ministers to make sure the companies stick to their promises to passengers. Transport Minister, Glenda Jackson, told the Pendle MP: "Following the offer by First Group PLC to buy out the other shareholders of Great

Western Holdings Ltd, the Franchising Director has secured a package of passenger benefits and investments which include, for the North Western Trains network: £l million to be spent on additional passenger benefits, following consultation with the local Passenger Transport Executives, passengers' representatives and other interested bodies as to what the money should be spent on; CCTV cameras to be fitted to the 70 new trains North Western Trains are providing as part of their franchise commitments; and £100,000 to be spent on providing wheelchair access at core stations by the time that the new trains are introduced."

The Pendle MP commented: "People are fed up with getting a second rate service. It's time for the train companies to deliver."

For Immediate Release. No 105/98 Thursday 9 April 1998

UK CANCELS MORE DEBTS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Big hearted Pendle folk who have given generously to help reduce the crushing burden of debt carried by developing countries will be well pleased with the news this week that Jamaica has become the latest country to benefit from debt relief says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP said: "I have had lots of letters from local churches who will obviously be delighted that the Government has cancelled the £7.3 million of aid debt owed by Jamaica to the UK this year. Instead, the money which would have come to Britain will be transferred to the Jamaican Ministry of Education and used to improve basic education facilities in Jamaica by providing higher quality schooling for poor children."

The cash will pay for such items as water storage tanks and sanitation facilities for schools in poor areas which previously would have had to close in time of drought and basic teaching and learning materials for schools in poor areas.

Notes to Editors: Jamaica's aid debt is being written off as part of the Commonwealth Debt Initiative, which was launched by Chancellor Gordon Brown at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' meeting in Mauritius in September. The total figure of debt to be forgiven is expected to reach £132 million.

To date, Britain has agreed to cancel the remaining aid debts of: Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Mauritius, St Lucia, Tonga and Turks & Caicos.

For Immediate Release. No 106/98 Wednesday 8 April 1998

PENDLE MP HAILS NEW LIMIT ON WORK HOURS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing the new "Working Time Directive" which prevents employers from forcing employees, without their consent, to work longer than an average 48 hour week. He also welcomes the extra entitlement to leave for

parents and increased rights for part-time workers which came a step nearer this week.

The meeting earlier this week of the Social Affairs Council in Luxembourg agreed that Britain should implement the Part Time Work Directive in the UK within the next two years.

DTI Mnister, Ian McCartney said: "The Part-Time Work Directive has been extended to the UK at the first Council meeting possible. This is because we are committed to part-time workers having at least the same rights as full-time workers across Europe."

The Pendle MP added: "Part-timers will now have a right to paid holidays and occupational pensions as well as opportunities for training and promotion where these are available to full-time workers."

"This will clearly help women, who make up the majority of part-time workers. Working parents will have greater flexibility to balance work and family life."

Ian McCartney commented: "As this Government plays its part at the heart of Europe British workers will feel the benefits."

For Immediate Release. No 107/98 Wednesday 8 April 1998

MP CALLS FOR SHAKE UP OF LEGAL PROFESSION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon called for a fundamental shake up of the legal profession. He told the Commons the legal profession was shot through with restrictive practices and was one of the last great institutions to remain unreformed.

The MP said the 50 or so barristers who would take silk (be appointed as Queen's Counsel) tomorrow, Maundy Thursday, will have won the jackpot in terms of securing for life stratospheric earnings and high status which, he said, may be undeserved.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "No-one really knows how QCs get there. It is a mystery. The Lord Chancellor takes "informal soundings" from senior judges and the successful candidates just emerge. It is not good enough. The system needs to be open and transparent. Personally, I would abolish the institution of QC and move over to a unified legal profession combining the solicitor and barrister branches. This is quite usual in other common law jurisdictions such as the United States. It is likely to happen anyway in the longer term now that solicitors have gained the right of audience in the higher courts. The split profession works against the public interest by loading extra costs on to clients."

The MP added: "I would also like to see Labour's proposal for a Judicial Appointments Commission resurrected. The appointment of judges is far too important a job simply to be left to the Lord Chancellor - from whatever party."

Note to Editors: Last October, the Lord Chancellor decided not to proceed with the proposal to establish a Judicial Appointments Commission given the other competing priorities facing his Department. He is to report annually to Parliament on the exercise of his powers to appoint judges.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 108/98 Monday 13 April 1998

BARLICK MAN RISES ABOVE THE STORM

Local hero, John Edwards, of Myers Street, Barnoldswick is counting his blessings today after escaping flash floods last week in Stratford-upon-Avon where he and his wife Pat and family were taking an Easter break.

John was stirred - and then shaken - at 1.30am when he heard the sound of running water cascading into his caravan. He gazed in amazement as the bubbling and churning water rose rapidly towards him. There was only one thing to do - abandon ship!

Speaking to his neighbour, local MP Gordon Prentice, on his return home from a sodden Stratford, the plucky Barlicker said: "It was an experience we shall never forget. Our dog, a boxer who does not like water, is very upset about the whole thing. The weather ruined his holiday. We are all devastated. We had to abandon our caravan and our 4 wheel drive which were both totally submerged."

John added wistfully: "Before we were washed out, we visited the Royal Shakespeare Company to see a splendid production of Twelfth Night. However, we survived the tempest and all's well that ends well!"

John Edwards can be contacted on 01282 814495.

For Immediate Release. No 109/98 Wednesday 15 April 1998

MP MARKS THE FIRST YEAR OF THE NEW LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be speaking to the Barnoldswick Branch of the Pendle Labour Party this evening (Wednesday).

The MP will say: "Almost a year ago the people of Britain elected a new Labour Government and people are now getting the measure of it."

"I hope people are reasonably satisfied - as I am - with the progress we are making. Of course, we could always do better and we have stepped on some banana skins along the way. But we never promised to change everything for the better overnight. We offered a step by step approach and that is what we are doing."

"The peace deal in Ireland is magnificent news for us all. But in every single area of public policy things are changing for the better. Education remains the Government's top priority with the NHS a close second. Welfare to work is the coping stone initiative which sets out Labour's guarantee for the young unemployed. We are saying to young people that the Government will help them if they help yourself. There is no easy option of staying in bed all day and drawing benefit if you are young and fit and healthy. We are not going to allow that to continue."

The MP added: "We are reforming the way in which the country is governed to give people a bigger say in the issues they care about.."

For Immediate Release. No 110/98 Tuesday 14 April 1998

MP HAILS PEACE DEAL IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The peace deal, painstakingly put together in Northern Ireland and agreed last week, has been hailed by local MP, Gordon Prentice as the breakthrough everyone hoped for - but few could have imagined possible - actually happened.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson after the Easter weekend, the MP said: "If this peace deal holds - and I believe it will - we shall have turned the corner. I hope and pray the deal will be endorsed overwhelmingly by voters in the simultaneous referendums which are to be held next month in the Republic and in Northern Ireland."

The MP added: "We all want peace so that we can live our lives in harmony and in security and safety. What is happening before our eyes is momentous and historic. A peaceful Ireland will bring prosperity to all who live there and it will have a powerful effect here on the British mainland."

"Generations yet unborn will celebrate this moment that we are witnessing."

For Immediate Release. No 111/98 Wednesday 15 April 1998

PENDLE MP PREPARES TO ENTER HOSTILE TERRITORY

The Duke of Westminster has invited local MP Gordon Prentice to visit his estate to see at first hand what is being done to accommodate the public's wish for greater access to open countryside. And the MP has accepted.

The MP wrote last month to the Duke, who owns vast swathes of the Forest of Bowland, and to his aristocratic neighbour, Lord Savile, who owns tracts of land on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border, to ask how they intended to open up their land to greater public access. The Government has issued a consultation paper seeking views on the best way of securing greater public access to land.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "Landowners generally look on me with hostility or suspicion but I have no hidden agenda. I am simply determined to see that people have the right to walk over open countryside where the mere fact of ownership currently keeps them out. The Duke told me he is considering the Government's consultation paper and I am delighted to have this opportunity to see for myself what they are doing."

The MP added: "Lord Savile told me that he is not in favour of a right to roam but would be prepared to consider a request fro a path over his land if a case could be made."

The MP will shortly be speaking to the local branch of the National Farmers Union on the Government's proposals.

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP is a keen campaigner for greater access to the countryside. Last February in the Commons he urged the Prime

more follows

Minister to bring in a legal right to roam. The MP referred the PM to an article written in **Country Life** written by former Conservative Cabinet Minister, William Waldegrave. Prentice told Blair that the Tory grandee had predicted "direct action, civil disorder and civil disobedience" if Labour pressed ahead with legislation. The Pendle MP pressed the Prime Minister to tell Waldegrave that these threats would "cut no ice" and that he would legislate.

The MP has also tabled an early Day Motion on the Commons Order Paper calling for greater access to the countryside which has been backed by close to 200 Labour backbench MPs.

The Early Day Motion reads: This House believes there should be a legal right of access to open countryside which would allow people to walk freely over uncultivated land subject always to restrictions safeguarding wildlife and flora and the legitimate economic interests of those working the land; believes that ownership by itself is not a sufficient reason to deny access and recognises that there is a widespread expectation that the Government intends to legislate to give the many this right denied to them by the few.

PHOTOCALL: Gordon Prentice MP will be lending his support to the Multiple Sclerosis stall in the Arndale Centre on Saturday 18 April at 3.00pm.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is Secretary of the All Party MS Group and also Honorary President of the local branch of the MS Society. In that capacity he will be joining members of the local MS Society at their stall. It marks the beginning of a whole week of activities to raise public awareness of Multiple Sclerosis and coincides with a National Campaign lasting eight days with the North West area being specifically targetted.

The MP said: “MS is a disease that can affect people of any age, but too often it strikes the young. This campaign is to give the general public a better understanding of the condition and to raise much needed funds for research. We are all hoping for a breakthrough.”

For Immediate Release. No 113/98 Thursday 1 April 1998

PHOTOCALL PENSIONERS

For Immediate Release. No 114/98 Tuesday 21 April 1998

SETTLEMENT IN IRELAND GIVES HOPE FOR KASHMIR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today told a Parliamentary lobby on Kashmir that the settlement in Ireland and the latest peace moves in the middle east give hope for a resolution of the long running conflict in Kashmir.

He said: "When all sides want peace and are prepared to start talking then a settlement becomes possible. What is happening in Ireland as I speak gives us tremendous encouragement that a breakthrough in Kashmir - after all these years - may just be possible."

The MP joined Gerald Kaufman, Peter Pike and others to pledge his support for the campaign for a referendum in Kashmir to allow the people there to decide their own future.

The MP said: "This conflict has been unresolved for over 50 years - despite the existence of valid UN resolutions - so we need to work ever harder to make people sit up and simply take notice. Britain must use its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and its Presidency of the European Union to focus the attention of the world on the plight of this troubled land."

The MP spoke of the tragedy of Paul Wells and the countless others who had disappeared without trace. He also praised the work of his local council for its pioneering work to promote "Kashmir Awareness Week".

The lobby of Westminster was organised by the All Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference.

For Immediate Release. No 115/98 Thursday 23 April 1998

UPGRADING SKILL LEVELS "VITAL FOR THE FUTURE"

Success in upgrading skills throughout the North West is the key to the region's future prosperity says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP was speaking at Westminster last night to a gathering of twenty North West TEC (Training and Enterprise Councils) Chief Executives and Chairpersons.

The MP said skill shortages threatened to hold back growth in some key sectors of industry such as aerospace. In other sectors across the region low skills and low wages were problems which had to be tackled with vigour.

The MP said: "The Government is committed to the concept of "lifelong learning". The industrial revolution was based on capital investment in machinery. The new information revolution will be based on knowledge and the skills of our people. So we need to make education and training our top priorities. We have made a start with the New Deal but there is an enormous agenda that needs to be addressed."

The MP added: "The new Regional Development Agencies and the proposed University for Industry will, with the TECs, be the drivers for change. I want to see the North West - and North East Lancashire in particular - moving up the prosperity league table."

Note to Editors: The Government's Green Paper "The Learning Age" was launched last month and is out for consultation.

For Immediate Release. No 116/98 Thursday 23 April 1998

MP STEPS UP CAMPAIGN TO SAVE DUTY FREE

The planned abolition of duty free sales within the European Union in July 1999 should be urgently reconsidered says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP returned to the crunch issue at Treasury Questions today - a month since he last quizzed the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, on the same subject.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP urged the Chancellor to raise the issue with other EU Finance Ministers at the next meeting of Ecofin that the whole issue should be looked at again in the light of the recent unanimous resolution of the European Parliament calling for further work to be done on the possible impact of abolition of duty free on jobs and commerce. The European Parliament has called on the Commission and the member states to complete this study before September this year.

Speaking after the Commons exchange, the Pendle MP said: "I was disappointed by the Chancellor's reply which did not hold out any hope of the matter being reconsidered but the issue is not dead and it will not go away."

The MP added: "If duty free is axed in 1999 there will still be different tax rates in the various countries of the European Union. When the proposal was first thought up years ago, the European Commission believed there would be harmonised tax rates across the EU. That hasn't happened yet - if it ever does. So the rationale for abolishing duty free is simply not there."

Note to Editors: After July 1999 there will still be duty free shops on ferries and at airports but only passengers travelling outside the European Union will be able to take advantage of them. Duty free for travel within the EU will have ended.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 117/98 Tuesday 28 April 1998

PENDLE BIDS FOR HELP FROM HOUSING MINISTER

The Leader of Pendle Council, Alan Davies, and the Chief Executive Stephen Barnes joined local MP, Gordon Prentice, at the London HQ of the Department of the Environment, Regions and Transport in a bid to safeguard the Borough's housing programme next year.

The trio met Housing Minister, Hilary Armstrong, who visited Pendle on 28 February.

The Borough's MP said: "A few months ago, Hilary saw for herself the unique cocktail of problems and challenges facing the Borough.
We have some of the oldest and most run down housing in the entire country and we need help to puts things to right."

The MP added: "Unfortunately, we have a technical hitch that needs to be ironed out and I know that Hilary is aware of the problem facing us. The new Government's "capital receipts initiative" amounting to £810,000 in Pendle must be used on "new initiatives" but the Borough wants to use the cash to support the existing housing programme. That is also my view."

The MP added: "There is a definitional issue about what constitutes a "new" initiative."

"The Minister knows we face a daunting task in improving our housing stock."

For Immediate Release. No 118/98 Tuesday 28 April 1998

MP TO MEET FARMERS TO DISCUSS ACCESS TO LAND

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be telling local farmers this Friday (1 May) that they have nothing to fear from the Government's proposals to increase public access to land. He will tell the local branch of the NFU - meeting at the Fence Gate Inn in Fence - that greater access will happen and the Government wants to work with farmers and landowners to devise the right kind of formula which recognises everyone's rights and responsibilities.

In February the Government published a consultation paper setting out options for a voluntary or statutory approach. The consultation period runs until 5 June and the MP will be visiting the Duke of Westminster's Ribble Valley Grosvenor Estate on Friday afternoon to discuss the same issue.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government has made it clear it wants to extend public access to mountain, moorland, heath, down and registered common land. It would exclude agricultural and developed land. The voluntary approach to achieving greater access has not been ruled out but the consultation paper makes it clear that this isn't the easy option. The amount of land offered up would have to be substantially the same as that likely to be covered should we have to legislate."

Note to Editors: The meeting will begin at 8pm. The NFU's group secretary is Stephen Faucett. An Early Day Motion tabled by the Pendle MP attracted the support of 200 Labour Backbenchers reads: "This House believes there should be a legal right of access to open countryside which would allow people to walk freely over uncultivated land subject always to restrictions safeguarding wildlife and flora and the legitimate economic interests of those working the land; believes that ownership by itself is not a sufficient reason to deny access and recognises that there is a widespread expectation that the Government intends to legislate to give the many this right denied to them by the few."

For Immediate Release. No 119/98 Tuesday 28 April 1998

OLD FOLKS HOMES ARE SAFE PLEDGES PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has sought to calm fears about the future of Lancashire County Council's residential homes for the elderly, pledging they will not close.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "The recent press coverage must be fuelling terrible anxieties that elderly residents of County Council residential

homes such as Cravendale are likely to be turfed out on their ears. There is no truth in speculative stories fanned by the Liberal Democrats."

"The Liberal Democrats have a track record of scaring the living daylights out of people. I am not in the business - and neither is the new Labour Government - of harming in any way the interests, well-being and security of elderly people in our residential homes."

The MP continued: "Of course it is the case that the County Council is looking at how the service can be best provided while safeguarding absolutely the interests of the elderly residents. They are looking at all the options as well as the funding. Money doesn't grow on trees and the county has to ensure it is getting the best value for taxpayers' money but this is a million miles away from secretly scheming to close down homes."

"There is no secret plan. On the contrary, I am told that the Social Services Committee looked at the issue quite openly in January and all political parties on the County Council including the Liberal Democrats were involved. So far as the national picture goes, the new Labour Government set up last December a Royal Commission into long term care and will report by the end of the year."

more follows

OLD FOLKS HOMES ARE SAFE PLEDGES PENDLE MP

"Clearly there should be a level playing field between the County residential homes and those in the private sector. At the moment there are some problems. The County's overheads are generally higher, the county often pays higher wages to carers than the private homes and the minimum wage which will improve wages throughout the sector has yet to be introduced. In addition, a higher amount of Residential Care Allowance, paid from residents' Income Support, goes to the private sector homes."

The MP added: "No-one is saying that all residential care should be provided by county councils any more than by the private sector. My own view is there should be a mix. The County Council should not only plan and regulate services for the elderly but should also, if it chooses, provide them - and that includes residential homes for the elderly."

"I have written to Ministers stressing this point and I have discussed the matter at length with the chair of the County Council's Social Services Committee, Doreen Pollitt."

Note to Editors: After April 1993. elderly people on income support going into private residential homes can also get personal allowances and premiums (should they be disabled). These are added to the basic £57.50p. Elderly people going into County Council Residential Care do not get these add ons and receive a fixed £64.70p. This difference in approach can impact on the charges made at Private Homes.

For Immediate Release. No 120/98 Tuesday 21 April 1998

MP BACKS NEW CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE LADDER INJURY TOLL

Local MP Gordon Prentice today warned DIY enthusiasts not to leave ladder safety to luck after Government figures revealed that one person a week is killed and 110 people are injured a day in accidents involving the use of ladders. Consumer Affairs Minister Nigel Griffiths released the figures to coincide with a new DTI safety campaign to cut down on the growing number of DIY injuries. Safety leaflets will be distributed to all major DIY stores as well as high street retailers and will include essential safety tips to avoid DIY disasters such as electric shocks, ladders injuries and gas explosions.

Speaking from Westminster Gordon Prentice said: 'The number of people killed or injured in DIY-related accidents is astonishing. Spring is the traditional start of the DIY season and I urge everyone who may be thinking of getting on their ladders to take a few moments to read these leaflets - it could mean the difference between life and death.'

Note to editors: 70 people are killed each year and 250,000 people are injured in DIY-related accidents.
40,000 require hospital treatment through accidents involving ladders each year

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 121/98 Wednesday 22 April 1998

PENDLE JOBLESS FIGURES SLIGHTLY DOWN

The number of people in Pendle out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance last month stood at 1379 - a workforce rate of 3.7%. This is a slight fall on February's figure of 1430.

1379 men were unemployed and 293 women. There were 413 unfilled vacancies at the Job Centre in Nelson and 166 at Colne.

Nationally the figures are set to rise because the Government is changing the way it calculates the true level of unemployment. In opposition Labour consistently argued that the Conservatives fiddled the jobless figures. With the old system large groups of people were not included such as 16 and 17 year olds and part-timers.
Employment Minister Andrew Smith said: 'This Government said at the outset that credibility must be restored to labour market statistics in order to provide a fuller, more transparent picture of an increasingly complex labour market.'

Speaking from Westminster the Pendle MP Gordon Prentice said: 'The new method of calculating the figures has not been yet been used in Pendle and we must be aware

of this when the figures are eventually calculated this way. Next month for instance the figures may show a rise.'

For Immediate Release. No 121/98 Tuesday 28 April 1998

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE PLEA TO HELP NW MANUFACTURING

Leaders of the North West Chambers of Commerce were at Westminster last night to tell politicians to give manufacturing industry a break! They claimed high interest rates and the £ exchange rate were threatening the region's manufacturing base. In the North West 37% of all employment is in the manufacturing sector - above the national average.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, acknowledged the short term difficulties but stressed the worst was probably over. "I raised the issue in the Commons with the Chancellor of the Exchequer about three months ago and he is well aware of the concerns. At that time the pound had appreciated about 26% against the German DM. Clearly, a very strong pound makes it more difficult for our exporters - and it also has an impact on tourism here in the North West. We find it cheaper to go on holiday abroad but foreigners find it more expensive here."

After the meeting the Pendle MP said: "The Government is proposing changes to the system of business rates and I want all my local business in Pendle to let me have their views. Tomorrow is too late! Copies of the consultation paper are available from my office or from the DET&R, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7NB and the closing date is 1 June."

The meeting with North West CofC chairman Anthony Goldstone and Director, Terry Cook, also included Labour's Peter Pike, Dave Borrow and other NW MPs. They also discussed the proposed North West Regional Development Agency and the Uniform Business Rate.

For Immediate Release. No 122/98 Tuesday 28 April 1998

MP GASPS AT BLOW TO KISS OF LIFE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today expressed his astonishment about the decision made by Customs and Excise that 'resuscitation training models' are no longer entitled to VAT relief.

Speaking from Westminster, Gordon Prentice, said: 'To coin a phrase - it takes your breath away, to hear that Customs & Excise have decided to claim that these models are not medical training equipment. These are used by the St. John Ambulance to

teach lifesaving techniques and the loss of the VAT relief will cost the organisation £75,000 each year. This would obviously be a serious blow to the 70,000 St. John Ambulance volunteers and would mean that fewer people will be training in life-saving resuscitation techniques.

He went on to say: ‘I am in touch with the Chancellor of the Exchequer about this and I hope there will be a change of mind in the very near future.’

For Immediate Release. No 123/98 Wednesday 29 April 1998

EAST LANCASHIRE HEALTH AUTHORITY GETS NEW £3,184,000 SHARE OF £500m BOOST FOR NHS

East Lancashire Health Authority is to receive a new £3,184,000 share of the Government's £500 million boost for the NHS to tackle waiting lists.

The details of the cash boost to East Lancashire forms part of the Government's overall announcement of the allocations to individual health authorities nationwide of the extra £500m which the Budget earmarked for the NHS.

Welcoming the £3,184,000 cash injection into East Lancashire Health Authority, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "This is a real tonic for patients in Pendle. £3,184,000 of new NHS money to tackle the first priority of local people - getting the NHS waiting lists down."

"The Government has said that they will be closely monitoring the performance of East Lancashire Health Authority. I shall be doing precisely the same and letting people know just how this extra cash is being spent."

""The £500 million takes to £2 billion the extra money the Government has put into the Health Service in its first year. Close to £5 million extra for every single day during the coming year."

"That's £2 billion more than the Tories we planning to spend on the NHS. And it's more than three times as much as the Liberals promised the Health Service at the General Election."

For Immediate Release. No 124/98 Thursday 30 April 1998

MP WELCOMES MOVES TO STOP DECLINE OF TOWN CENTRES

The Local Government Minister, Hilary Armstrong, has told Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, that the new Government is determined to arrest the decline of shopping centres in small towns. The MP had earlier expressed his concern that the burden of

business rates and the impact of other policies had driven many local business people into a corner.

The Minister says that planning policy guidance on town centres and retail development strongly emphasises existing centres as a focus for new investment in retail and other town centre uses such as cinemas.

The Minister also acknowledged that many small businesses feel they carry an excessive burden under the rates system. The Government is consulting at the moment on the future of business rates.

The Pendle MP commented: "Small towns such as those in my own constituency need help if they are to retain viable shopping centres. Of course, it is a partnership between central and local government and local people themselves. So far as their local shops are concerned, people have got to use them or lose them."

Note to Editors: The Minister's letter dated 27 April reads: Thank you for your letter... about the decline of small town centres and the business rates.
Market towns are important to our aim of sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of existing centres by focusing development, especially retail developments, in these centres. Our planning policy guidance on town centres and retail development, PPG6, strongly emphasises existing centres as a focus for new investment in retail and other town centre uses such as cinemas, and encourages a plan led, sequential approach to site selection. Many developers and retailers have

more follows

understood the message of the guidance and have adapted their development proposals, and the guidance has been well-received and has all-party support,

As you know, we published our Response to the Environment Committee's report on Shopping Centres last y@: a copy of the News Release is enclosed. This reaffirmed our support for PPG6.

Where high streets have declined, for whatever reason, we want local planning authorities to establish a partnership involving businesses, property owners and the local community, and develop a strategy for their future. The appropriate strategy will vary, depending on the centre's role, and how its attractions, accessibility and amenity compare with competing centres.

Finally, I am aware that many small businesses feel they carry an excessive burden under the rating system. We recognise that business rates do account for a larger proportion of both turnover and profits of small businesses than they do for larger businesses. In Chapter 6 of our consultation paper on the future of the rating system, which was published on 30 March, we sought people's views on ways to reduce this disparity. I attach a copy of the paper.

2. The consultation period on business rates ends on 1 June 1998.

For Immediate Release. No 126/98 Thursday 30 April 1998

MP CALLS FOR INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY OF "UNDULY PROLONGED" POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon called on the Attorney General to set up a new system to ensure speedy police investigations. The MP said some investigations "roll on for years" especially in the area of serious fraud.

Speaking in the Commons, the MP told the Attorney, John Morris QC, that in some other common law jurisdictions, police investigations are called in for review after 12 months by an independent body to check progress. The Minister recognised the point was a serious one but said it was a matter for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and he could not intervene.

Speaking after the exchange, Gordon Prentice said: "I hope it is only a matter of time before we adopt this practice. I told the House this afternoon that this procedure could be a welcome, additional safeguard against corruption in the police. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner has already voiced his concerns and last year we had the truly amazing spectacle of the Metropolitan Police throwing road-blocks around the HQ of the Special Branch in Walthamstow."

"Clearly, corrupt police - of which, mercifully, there are few - are in a position to slow down or otherwise influence the conduct of investigations. My proposal would make this a million times more difficult to sustain."

For Immediate Release. No 127/98 Thursday 30 April 1998

PENDLE MP LEAPS TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEFENCE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon leapt to the defence of the embattled Lord Chancellor, Derry Irvine, "warmly congratulating" him and his Commons colleague, Parliamentary Secretary, Geoff Hoon, for publishing details earlier this week of the earnings from legal aid of top QCs.

The Pendle MP, who said the Lord Chancellor "gets a pretty bad press", told the Leader of the House at Business Questions that yesterday's Parliamentary Answer to Lancashire MP, Colin Pickthall, showed that up to £200,000 a year of public money went into the pockets of some barristers. He wanted a debate to discuss this and other aspects of the legal profession.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "Tomorrow, a new intake of 50 Queen's Counsel will be gathering in the House of Lords to be sworn in, dressed up in their breeches and silver buckled shoes. No-one knows how they were selected or if they really constitute the cream of the bar."

The MP added: "In my own view, the whole system needs a complete shake up."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 128/98 Wednesday 6 May 1998

PENDLE DENTISTS PROBE MP's VIEWS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be in the hot seat this Friday as he fields questions from local dentists, one year into the new Labour Government. The MP is a keen supporter of NHS dentistry and is working hard to boost provision in an area which has one of the worst dental health records in the country.

Speaking at Westminster before Friday's gathering in Nelson, the MP said: "NHS dentistry needs a helping hand for it to survive and prosper. In some parts of the country it is easier to win the lottery than to get an NHS dentist. So we have a lot of work to do to put things to right."

"I know our local dentists will want to talk about the Government's "Investing in Dentistry" initiative; recruitment into the profession and getting dentists to work in the areas where the need is greatest. These are all subjects close to my own heart."

The MP added: "There is no reason why people shouldn't keep their own teeth for their natural life."

"Dentistry should be a top priority for the NHS - not an optional add-on."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 129/98 Wednesday 6 May 1998

MP DETERMINED TO DISCUSS BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be heading off to Blackpool this Monday (11 May) to address the annual conference of the Association of Master Bakers.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "A lot of independent bakers feel under threat, complaining that some supermarkets are selling bread as a loss leader for less than the cost to small bakers of baking it. Clearly, it is in no-one's interest to see our small independent bakers driven out of business."

The MP added: "There are lots of other important issues facing the food industry. We are shortly to establish a new Food Standards Agency - a move designed to reassure the public that the Government is taking food standards and hygiene very seriously. After all the food scares of recent years, we need reassurance that the food we eat is safe."

After speaking to the bakers on Monday morning, the MP will return to Westminster for the debate in the afternoon on the Competition Bill - a measure which addresses many of the bakers' concerns.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 130/98 Wednesday 6 May 1998

FIGURES SHOW BIG INCREASE IN PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

Figures supplied by Health Minister, Paul Boetang, to local MP, Gordon Prentice, show a big increase in private residential care during the 1990s.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: "The previous Government force fed the private sector which grew at an astonishing rate. In Lib Dem Devon, for example, the number of independent homes increased from 644 in 1992 to 836 in 1997 while the number of council run homes declined from 46 to 37. All over the country, this was the pattern during the decade."

"I take the view that councils still have a role in delivering residential care for the elderly and I want to see a level playing field for the local authority and independent sectors. Both have a role to play and I am sure this will be recognised by the Royal Commission on Long Term Care which was set up by the new Government and will report by the turn of the year.

The MP added: "I was concerned to read reports about the future of County Council homes in Pendle. I want to see everyone - including the Lib Dems - participating in a rational debate on long term care rather than frightening old folk out of their wits."

The Health Minister told the MP: "The independent sector has flourished during the period (92-97). Local authorities need to ensure in commissioning services, whether from the public or independent sector, that users' needs are considered and that good quality, cost effective services are provided."

Note to Editors: Tables showing number of residential homes attached.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 131/98 Wednesday 6 May 1998

PENDLE MP QUIZZES PM ON FLUORIDATION

The Prime Minister told the Commons today that evidence suggests fluoridation of the water supply has a positive effect.

Tony Blair was responding to a question from Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, who told the Commons that he would be meeting local dentists on Friday to discuss "the politics of dentistry" and that his audience would be interested in the Prime Minister's views.

The Pendle MP quoted the Minister for Public Health, Tessa Jowell, who told the House in an earlier adjournment debate on fluoridation that fluoride reduces tooth decay by between one third and one half. And since 1985, no fewer than 55 health authorities had applied to their water companies to fluoridate the water supply and not a single one had been successful.

Speaking after the exchange, Prentice said: "Fluoridation excites strong passions but, as I told the Prime Minister, we cannot allow public health decisions to be taken by unelected water companies. The Public Health Minister said that no ill effects have been found to exist and said the present set up "is a mess"."

The MP continued: "The dental health of children in East Lancashire is the worst in the country. Some people say that fluoridation is "mass medication" and yet fluoride occurs naturally in many parts of the country and the dental health of people there is way above average. Calcium, iron and folic acid are added to flour for bread and no-one bats an eyelid."

Notes to Editors: Consultation on the Government's Green Paper "Our Healthier Nation" ended on 30 April. A White Paper setting out legislative proposals is expected to be published in the Autumn.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 132/98 Saturday 9 May 1998

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP will be at the Place de Creil in Nelson at 1.30pm today, Saturday to support calls for debt relief for poor countries

Up to 40 countries with over 600 million people cannot even begin to address their growing education and health care needs because the money they should spend on these vital services is going to repay debt says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP was speaking in advance of a photocall with representatives of local churches in Nelson's Place de Creil at 1.30pm today, Saturday.

The MP continued: "The debt burden that cripples the poorest countries and prevents them from tackling poverty and offering health and educational opportunity to their children is a debt burden that is unfair, inefficient and immoral. For that reason Chancellor Gordon Brown and International Development Secretary Clare Short launched a major debt initiative at the last meeting of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers in Mauritius."

"The Labour Government has called on world leaders to join Britain in ensuring that all eligible poor countries have embarked on the process of securing the debt relief they need by the year 2000."

Note to Editors: To date, Britain has agreed to cancel the remaining aid debts of: Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Mauritius, St Lucia, Tonga and Turks & Caicos.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 133/98 Monday 11 May 1998

NUCLEAR TESTS ANGER MP

The decision of the Indian Government to explode underground three nuclear devices has been condemned by Pendle MP.

The underground nuclear test, announced today, is the first for 25 years and the MP fears it could herald the start of a dangerous new nuclear arms race in the sub continent. Pakistan has condemned the explosion.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "India has always refused to sign the nuclear test ban treaty and now we know why. It is utter madness for India to go down this road, squandering money which should be used to improve the well-being of its impoverished people."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 134/98 Wednesday 13 May 1998

MP CALLS FOR REVIEW OF PROXY VOTING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing the Government to root out fraud in proxy voting. His move comes in the wake of recent allegations that people in local elections have been duped into signing away their right to vote.

The MP said: "The integrity of the ballot lies at the very heart of our democracy. People who try to cheat are committing a very serious offence and the full force of the law should be brought to bear. I would come down on these cheats like a ton of bricks."

The MP has been given an assurance the Government is to look at the issue.

Home Office Minister, George Howarth, told the Pendle MP: "The Working Party on Electoral Procedures, which I chair, will be examining both proxy and postal voting. We will pay particular attention to the need to achieve a balance between accessibility and the prevention of abuse."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 135/98 Wednesday 13 May 1998

MP WARNS OF LASER SURGERY DANGERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for a review of laser surgery which is used to correct short sight. The MP said he was astonished to learn from a surgeon that in about 12 per cent of operations using the technique the sight of the patient was left worse than before.

Health Minister, Alan Milburn, told the Pendle MP: "The Department of Health is consulting the Royal College of Ophthalmologists about this procedure which is not available under the NHS but carried out in private clinics. The College has undertaken to provide information on complications and clinical standards. This will inform a judgement about the adequacy of the regulatory provisions currently available."

The Pendle MP added: "This is a step in the right direction. I simply wonder how many people paying for these operations were told of the risks beforehand."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 136/98 Wednesday 13 May 1998

MP BACKS COMMUNITY PHARMACIES

The Government is fully committed to the place of community pharmacy within the NHS says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP says the Competition Bill - which had its Second Reading in the Commons this week - does not create a new threat to community pharmacies. "The Government is not abolishing Resale Price Maintenance for drugs. All the Bill does is maintain the position that has applied for 30 years: namely that Resale Price Maintenance should be allowed if - but only if - an independent competition body, the Restrictive Practices Court, is satisfied that it is in the public interest. If the court is satisfied that it is in the public interest, it will carry on as now."

The MP added: "The Government recognises the valuable role that community pharmacies can play in helping build a new and modern NHS. Indeed, we want to build on their expertise so that they can make an even greater contribution to meeting the health needs of local people. That is why the Government is currently in

discussions with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee about how community pharmacists can take a more active, expanded role within the health service in future. The Government is committed to an NHS available when you need it, and as close to your home as possible - and that applies to pharmaceutical services as much as to any others."

Note to Editors: There is already a well established system - the Essential Small Pharmacies Scheme - for subsidising small, but necessary, pharmacies. This applies to small community pharmacies in towns as well as in rural areas. Last year this scheme provided help for 280 small pharmacies across the country.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 345 6789 (pager - give number 819338) or 01282 695471 (Pendle) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 137/98 Thursday 14 May 1998

MORE TEETH PULLED IN THE NORTH WEST THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN UK

More teeth are extracted from youngsters' mouths in the North West than in any other region in the country according to figures extracted by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. Careful probing by the MP, who takes a close interest in dentistry, shows that East Lancashire Health Authority ranks 79 out of 100 in term of most teeth pulled per 1,000 population under 18.

The figures which were given to the Pendle MP by Health Minister, Alan Milburn, confirm that Lancashire is the nation's blackspot so far as oral health is concerned. In East Lancashire, 125.3 teeth were extracted per 1,000 population amounting to 16,440 teeth in 1997. Faring even worse, comes North West Lancashire (rank 91 out of 100) with 155.1 teeth extracted per 1,000 population (15,475 teeth). South Lancashire comes in at rank 95 with 182.5 teeth extracted per 1,000 of the population under 18. Then Wigan and Bolton (rank 96), Liverpool (rank 97), Doncaster (rank 98), Salford and Trafford (rank 99) and Tees (rank 100) where a staggering 254.6 teeth are extracted per 1,000 of the population under 18.

The Pendle MP commented: "These very wide regional variations are very worrying and the reasons behind these differences need urgently to be addressed. The plain fact is that more needs to be done to help those regions such as the North West where dental health is so poor."

The MP added: "I shall be pressing the Health Minister to put his money where his mouth is."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 138/98 Thursday 14 May 1998

PENDLE JOBLESS FIGURES

The number of people out of work and claiming Jobseekers Allowance last month stood at 1,416 - 3.8% of the workforce. 1,075 men were out of work (5%) and 321 women (2.1%). There were 142 vacancies notified to the Job Centre in Colne and 247 at Nelson.

The jobless totals show a small increase in unemployment - up from 1,379 in March (3.7%) to 1,416 (3.8%) in April.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "Unemployment in Pendle is way below the regional and national averages. The key issue for us in East Lancashire is low pay and we expect some kind of indicative figure from the Low Pay Commission later this month. It will be introduced early next year."

Note to Editors: The Department of Education and Employment writes: Background to labour market statistics - May: The rate of improvement in the labour market slows but earnings growth has picked up Employment is currently growing at around 40 thousand per quarter. A healthy increase but down from the very high levels of around 100 thousand per quarter seen last year. Later figures from the claimant count and vacancies support the view that the labour market continues to improve at a slower pace.

Workforce jobs grew by 389 thousand in year to December 1997 - new vacancies in April were 223 thousand, a historically high level but somewhat lower than the numbers seen in the Spring and Summer of last year. Unfilled vacancies are at very high levels but are still affected by the introduction of the new computer system and, therefore, notified vacancy figures probably give a more accurate picture of the labour market.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 139/98 Thursday 14 May 1998

MP SEES A ROLL FOR THE CRAFT BAKER

Pendle master baker, Bill Oddie, featured in the Commons today as local MP, Gordon Prentice, called for action to protect craft bakers from supermarkets selling bread below cost as a loss leader.

The MP told DTI Minister, Nigel Griffiths, that he had spoken on Monday to the Annual Conference in Blackpool of the 8,000 strong Association of Master Bakers who have real concerns about predatory pricing. The MP said supermarkets were selling bread for less than the craft baker can make it. Small bakeries were closing.

The MP said: "Given that small bakeries are an important feature of the high street and we want to keep them can my hon friend give me an assurance that the Competition Bill which we debated on Monday will be effective in outlawing this kind of predatory pricing."

The MP added: "The Minister said the Bill would prevent the sale of goods below cost where there was an intention to drive out competition. I hope the Bill will be effective. In recent years we have seen predatory pricing by the privatised bus

companies drive out the competition. In newspapers, there is a very real problem and, as we have seen, the craft baker is also a target."

"The Government wants to revitalise town centres rather than create new shopping malls in the middle of the countryside. That why I believe there must be a roll for the craft baker."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 140/98 Thursday 14 May 1998

MP CALLS FOR FRESH UN RESOLUTION ON KASHMIR

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice is calling for a new resolution on Kashmir to be considered by the United Nations as a way of breaking the log-jam which has kept the dispute between India and Pakistan festering for 50 years.

The MP was speaking in the Commons today after the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, pledged firm action against India in the wake of the nuclear tests carried out this week. Britain's High Commissioner in New Delhi is being recalled for urgent talks.

The Pendle MP told the Foreign Secretary that Kashmir could be the flash point for a nuclear war on the sub-continent. He said: "UN resolutions on Kashmir were carried in the 1940s and have still not been acted upon. A fresh resolution and a new mandate from the United Nations could be the way forward."

Robin Cook doubted this would produce a solution.

Speaking afterwards, Gordon Prentice said: "My own view is that sanctions against India are needed if the world is to stand any chance of containing the spread of nuclear weapons. Humanitarian aid to India which is designed to alleviate the hardship of the poverty stricken should clearly continue but Government to Government aid and trade deals should be put under the microscope."

The MP added: "Exploding nuclear devices cannot be allowed to be cost free."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 141/98 Thursday 1 May 1998

LITTLE INDIA - Helen

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 141/98 Thursday 28 May 1998

PHOTOCALL - Gordon Prentice MP at St Clements Court, Pendle Street, Barrowford.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be dropping in to say hello to the residents of St Clements Court in Barrowford on Friday 29 May at 4.00pm.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 142/98 Monday 18 May 1998

BIG DROP IN WATER DISCONNECTIONS IN NORTH WEST

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news of the big drop in the number of water disconnections in the North West.

Latest figures show household disconnection for non-payment fell by a staggering 77% to 93 in the 12 months ending 31 March 1998 compared with 1996-97. The main reason put forward by North West Water for the fall is their new practice of contacting customers early in the debt collection process. This means North West Water, in a similar way to other companies, can distinguish those who cannot pay from those who can afford but wilfully refuse to pay.

The Pendle MP commented: "The Government is proposing a "no disconnection" policy and I am 100% behind this move. The issue is being discussed by the industry at the moment. I take the simple and straightforward view that no-one should have their water cut off. There are other ways of making people who can pay and wilfully refuse to pay, cough up."

"There are compelling social and health reasons for maintaining the water supply in all circumstances" added the MP.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 143/98 Monday 18 May 1998

GOVERNMENT TO LOOK AT WAYS TO IMPROVE TECs

The role of the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) are to be put under the microscope to see how their contribution to the Government's education, training, and enterprise objectives, can be improved in future says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The six month review will also look at the way TECs will work with the new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).

Last month, The Pendle MP met twenty Chief Executives and Chairpersons of North West TECs at Westminster.

Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett said: "The new RDAs will advise Government on appropriate regional strategies to determine the skill requirement of each region and the best ways of providing those skills. Clearly this will require careful co-ordination of the work of all agencies working in this sector, including TECs. Our aim is to create a framework for TECs which encourages even higher standards and enables all to achieve the level best."

The review will examine: the remit of TECs funding and contracting frameworks; ways of reducing levels of irregular payments and fraudulent claims against TECs; how to reduce bureaucracy strengthening TEC accountability to local communities; the relationship of TECs with other agencies such as National Training Organisations.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 144/98 Monday 18 May 1998

MP WELCOMES NEW BILL TO REGISTER POLITICAL PARTIES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the publication of a new Bill which will, for the first time, allow for the registration of political parties.

Registration of political parties is necessary for the new PR electoral systems proposed for the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the European Parliament. Under the Bill, only parties registered with Companies House would be able to put forward lists of candidates.

The Pendle MP said: "This measure is long overdue. It will protect registered parties' names from misleading candidates' descriptions on ballot papers, such as the infamous case of the 'Literal Democrat' who robbed the real Liberal Democrat of thousands of votes in what was a blatant misrepresentation."

For the first time political parties would also be able to register an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper. This would make it easier for voters to distinguish between candidates and parties.

Home Secretary Jack Straw added: "A formal register of political parties is essential for the smooth operation of the proposed PR systems for the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the European Parliament. Although registration would be voluntary, any serious political party would need to register in order to protect its name. Also, unregistered political parties would not be able to make party political broadcasts."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 145/98 Monday 18 May 1998

INQUISITIVE MP

A survey of all Members of Parliament in yesterday's Observer newspaper showed that Pendle's MP is in the top one per cent when it comes to asking written Parliamentary questions!

The Pendle MP ranks sixth overall in the House of Commons in terms of the number of questions tabled between May 97 and March of this year. The survey shows that Pendle's inquisitive MP asked 426 questions - way ahead of the field but still lagging behind Mike Hancock (Lib Dem, Portsmouth South - 444 questions); Paul Flynn (Labour, Newport West - 468 questions); Malcolm Bruce (Lib Dem, Gordon - 631 questions) and Keith Vaz (Labour, Leicester East - 736 questions). The most inquisitive MP by a mile was Norman Baker - the Lib Dem MP for Lewes with a staggering 859 written questions to Ministers.

Commenting on the newspaper revelations, Pendle's Gordon Prentice, said: "These surveys often conceal as much as they reveal. One telling question - which can perhaps influence Government policy - can be worth hundreds of junk questions."

The MP added from across the Party divide: "Mind you, Norman Baker has a certain tenacity which has to be admired."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 146/98 Tuesday 26 May 1998

MP SHOCKED BY FARM DEATHS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is waging a campaign to make farms safer places. He says that 37 children - age 15 and under - have died during the nineties as a result of an accident arising from agricultural work.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "The farm is a very hazardous place - especially for children. Astonishingly, children as young as 13 can legally drive tractors on a farm. There are accidents out there just waiting to happen."

The MP continued: "The roll call of children's deaths is absolutely horrifying and I am pressing Ministers to address this issue urgently. In the year ended April 98, five children were killed on farms. The year before it was eight. This is a big concern for me, representing a constituency like Pendle with so many farms."

Note to Editors:

Year	FATAL
1990/1	6
1991/2	2
1992/3	8
1993/4	3
1994/5	2
1995/6	3
1996/7	8
1997/8	5

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 147/98 Tuesday 26 May 1998

MP SECURES FUTURE OF BARLICK'S THREATENED BENEFITS AGENCY OFFICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has secured the future of the Benefits Agency Public Caller Office in Barnoldswick - the town where the MP lives. Last August, the office had been threatened with closure on the grounds that too few people used it - and the service could be delivered more efficiently and cost effectively in another way.

Speaking from his home in the town, the MP said: "When this proposal emerged last summer I made it crystal clear to the Minister, Keith Bradley, that I wanted the office to stay in town. At a time when the Prime Minister was, quite rightly, drawing attention to the decline in rural services throughout the Conservative years, it would have been richly ironic if a town the size of Barlick had lost its Benefits Agency Office."

The MP continued: "The Benefits Agency has expressed concern about staff safety and one or two other matters and I shall be meeting the Agency's Operations Director on site, so to speak, to see what can be done. I want to see a better service for Barlickers."

Last October, new security measures were put in place at the Public Caller Office designed to calm fears among staff that working in the allegedly isolated office was altogether too risky. The move was triggered by aggressive behaviour by a member of the public in another BA office. The Barlick Office closed down temporarily to allow a risk assessment to be made and it re-opened on 10 October. The assessment made four recommendations to reduce the high risk rating. There is now a passive infra red sensor at the public entrance to the office and staff have personal alarms.

more follows

BENEFITS AGENCY OFFICE

Note to Editors: The Benefits Agency in Blackburn wrote to the Pendle MP on 8 August 1997 as follows: I am writing to seek your views on our proposal to close the Public Caller Office at Barnoldswick.

It may be helpful if I explain the background leading to this proposal. We are undertaking a review of service provision across our Area. The review includes looking at Public Caller Offices to assess the level of service provided. Our aim is to ensure that customers have access to a wide range of services and where possible to modernise and improve the service offered.

Currently Barnoldswick is open on Mondays and Fridays from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm. Approximately 27 people call at the PCO on each day it is open. The service is limited, offering no facilities to make payments of benefit. Research has shown that the majority of these callers wish to return completed forms which could be done by post or to request forms and leaflets which could be done by telephone. The provision of this service at Barnoldswick inevitably leads to a reduction in service at the Burnley office on what are usually the two busiest days of the week.

We will continue to provide a five day service at Colne in the same premises as the JobCentre which brings together help and advice customers need in
one place. There is a regular bus service between Barnoldswick and Colne.

I would welcome any views you may have on the proposal to close the Barnoldswick PCO before a final decision on its future is taken. I would be grateful if you could send any comments in writing to me before 19.9.97.

Note 2 to Editors: The MP replied on 15 August as follows:

Thank you for your letter of 8 August advising me of the proposal to close the Public Caller Office at Barnoldswick.

I have to say that I read your letter with dismay, as I cannot understand, for the life of me, why a medium size town such as Barnoldswick, with over 10,000 people, should have to lose so may of its public services and amenities, as if Colne were next door. In fact Colne must be a good five miles away from Barnoldswick and it would certainly be very inconvenient for many people to get to Colne.

You tell me that the Barnoldswick office is open Monday - Friday 9.30am - 3.30pm and that on average 27 people call each day. How does this compare with other PCOs in the North West and nationally? Is it not possible to perhaps restrict the opening hours further - perhaps limiting it to mornings only as an alternative to outright closure? Why is it not possible for the PCO to offer additional services at Barnoldswick which would attract additional callers? Does attendance at the PCO vary seasonally? What about the age profile of those using the PCO, are they more likely to be elderly or infirm?

You mention there is a regular bus service between Barnoldswick and Colne, but this is no substitute for having a PCO on the ground as it were and I would be very much opposed to its closure.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 148/98 Tuesday 26 May 1998

MP BACKS PROPOSALS TO CLEAN UP RIVERS

Proposals to force the water companies to clean up polluted rivers and streams are being backed by Pendle's MP, Gordon Prentice.

The Environment Agency - the Government's watchdog - says the current review of water company price limits which is being carried out by the water regulator - OFWAT - should be used to get water companies to clean up their act.

In a letter to the MP, the Agency's area manager, Mr Greifenberg, says: "This review is a major opportunity to ensure that where activities are harmful to the environment, water companies are required to make the necessary improvements and deliver an environment fit for the start of the 21st century."

Mr Greifenberg goes on: "In the North West (we) need to improve a number of sewerage systems and sewage treatment works to allow the achievement of river quality objectives and reduce aesthetic pollution... Examples of relevance to Pendle which the Agency has recommended be targeted for environmental improvements include pollution of Swinden Clough in Colne and Stock Beck in Barnoldswick by unsatisfactory combined sewer overflows and the achievement of the long-term river quality objectives in Colne Water below Colne Sewage Works."

The MP commented: "We all want a clean, pollution free environment and I shall be telling Ministers to give the green light to this clean up."

Note to Editors: The Department of Environment, Transport and Regions has asked for comments on the Environment Agency report on water clean up - A price well worth paying - by 12 June. The report can be found on the internet at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/info/consulta.html
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 149/98 Wednesday 27 May 1998

MP CALLS FOR CHEAPER CALLS!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves by the Telecoms Regular OFTEL to slash the price of calling mobile phones.

In March, OFTEL referred the issue to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission because any action on pricing in the mobile phone market would have potentially far-reaching consequences for consumers and the industry. The Telecoms watchdog wants the licences of Vodafone, Cellnet and BT to be modified which would. initially cut the cost of calling a mobile phone to less than 20 pence per minute with further reductions in the future.

The MP commented: "The phone companies have got to make a profit, no-one denies that, but it is pretty clear that we are being comprehensively ripped off. It costs an arm and a leg to call a mobile phone."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 150/98 Wednesday 27 May 1998

MP WELCOMES NEW RIGHTS FOR EMPLOYEES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the publication of the Government's White Paper, Fairness at Work, which gives important new rights to workers.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "Overall, it is a good package which will begin to level the playing field between employers and employees. The new rights should be seen alongside other initiatives which the Government has taken on the Social Chapter, an entitlement to paid holidays, the right to refuse to work excessively long hours and the introduction next year of the national minimum wage."

The MP continued: "The trade union recognition threshold - which excited so much controversy - is set at 40%. I would have gone for a simple majority of those voting in a recognition ballot and I would have extended the law to cover small firms. Nevertheless, I don't see the Government's proposals causing insuperable problems for the trade unions. If they have a majority of workers in membership then trade union recognition will be automatic. And even where unions aren't recognised, an individual trade unionist with a grievance can call in the trade union for help."

Note to Editors: The main features of the White Paper:
• reduction of the qualifying period for protection against unfair dismissal to one year
• the current cap on compensation for unfair dismissal to be abolished
• new statutory procedures to enable employees to have a trade union recognised by their employer where the majority of the relevant workforce want it
• a right of employees to complain of unfair dismissal in certain circumstances for taking part in official action organised within the law
• making it illegal to discriminate on grounds of trade union membership or activities. The blacklisting of trade unionists to be prohibited
• extension of maternity leave to 18 weeks and alignment of maternity pay
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 151/98 Thursday 1 May 1998

Visit St Clements Court

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 152/98 Friday 29 May 1998

PENDLE MP DISMAYED BY PAKISTAN NUCLEAR TEST

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said last night he was dismayed by yesterday's five nuclear tests carried out by Pakistan. The explosions came in the wake of the tests a fortnight ago by arch rival, India.

The MP was speaking at a packed reception in Brierfield community hall, organised by the Kashmir Welfare Association in honour of the new Mayor, Cllr Colin Waite.

The MP told the audience, which included Pakistan's Manchester based Vice Consul, that he deplored the nuclear tit for tat and he wanted to see a line drawn under the events of the past two weeks with both countries signing up to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Neither country is a signatory.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "The idea that nuclear weapons make the world a safer place is pure moonshine. The world is full of warring parties harbouring visceral hatreds. A proliferation of nuclear weapons will bring instability and danger. On the sub continent, Kashmir could be the flash point for nuclear war."

The MP added: "We must re-double our efforts to secure a settlement of the festering dispute in Kashmir which is poisoning the relationship between India and Pakistan."

The MP added: "After these tests there is no way that India would be accepted as a full member of the UN Security Council which she is very keen to join."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 153/98 Monday 1 June 1998

MP SUPPORTS ACTION TO SLASH PRICES OF TVs

President of The Board of Trade Margaret Beckett has taken action to crack down on price-fixing of TVs, washing machines, VCRs, camcorders, tumble driers, hi-fis, dishwashers, fridges and freezers.

She ordered manufacturers to stop setting recommended prices and banned them from cutting off supplies to stores because they sell at a discount. Consumer groups have predicted a cut in price of up to a quarter on these goods.

The move has been welcomed by Pendle MP Gordon Prentice. He said: "This is excellent news. People in Pendle will be able to shop around for better discount on their TVs, washing machines and fridges and will pay a fairer price. The Government has really delivered something which will help the pocket of ordinary people."

Margaret Beckett added: "This should ensure that discount retailers can get supplies and all retailers have the freedom to sell goods at the prices they choose. Consumers will have a wider choice of outlet and will benefit from more competitive pricing."

Notes to Editors: Last month, Margaret Beckett, President of The Board of Trade, made an Order under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to remedy the problems identified by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in their 1997 reports on the domestic electrical goods market.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 154/98 Monday 1 June 1998

NEW ROLE FOR LOLLIPOPS

Lollipop men and women could help adults as well as children cross the road near schools and in other places under proposals welcomed today by local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The Government will bring forward legislation to strengthen the powers available School Crossing Patrols and consult on proposals for Community Crossing Patrols. Existing powers enable lollipop men and women to stop traffic, but only for children on their way to or from school and only between the hours of 8am and 5.30pm.

Soeaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Lollipop men and women already have the safety of our children in their hands and there is no doubt that they play an extremely important part in road safety. This Government intends to do all it can to make journeys to any from school as safe as possible. The new legislation will make sure that there is absolutely no doubt that School Crossing Patrols can legally help children across the road who are below school age and to widen the hours they operate to more closely match local needs."

The MP added: "I will be encouraging local schools to develop travel plans to reduce the number of car trips to school. We need to get schools, parents, the council and local transport operators working together. Safety is a key factor. Creating the conditions in which more children can safely walk, cycle or take the bus to school would be good for children's health and develop children's independence. It would also be good for the environment. Twenty years ago, nearly 1 in 3 primary school children made their way to school by themselves. Now about 1 in 9 does. And a quarter of children are now being driven to school - double the proportion 20 years ago. You can see the problems that creates for traffic around schools on any school day."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 155/98 Monday 1 June 1998

MP TO ASK COOK TO MEET DEPUTATION OF MPs TO DISCUSS THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN SOUTH ASIA

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Commons this afternoon of the madness of Pakistan - 70% of whose population on 120 million is illiterate - spending 25% of its national budget in defence. The MP said he spoke as a friend of Pakistan and someone with many Kashmiri constituents.

The MP told Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, that last Thursday when Pakistan detonated the nuclear devices, he was speaking to a reception given by the Kashmir Welfare Association. The MP said: "I told them what I tell the House now, the nuclear tests are deplorable."

The MP also pressed the Foreign Secretary to comment on the line put out by the Pakistan authorities last week that the tests were required as they, the Pakistanis, were expecting an Indian strike on Pakistan's nuclear installations. Cook refused to be drawn on this.

Speaking after the Commons exchange, the Pendle MP said: "I understand the British Government is in a difficult position, but we really do need to be pro-active here. If we simply leave it to India and Pakistan we will get precisely nowhere."

The MP added: "I shall be getting in touch with the Foreign Secretary to ask him to receive a deputation of MPs who are deeply concerned about what is happening over there."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 156/98 Monday 1 June 1998

MP WANTS US TO LOSE OUR MARBLES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, stepped into controversial waters this afternoon in the House of Commons, when he asked Culture Secretary if he would return the Elgin Marbles to Athens in time for the millennium.

The Elgin Marbles are the statues which used to adorn the frieze around the Parthenon in ancient Athens. In 1816, Lord Elgin bought the marbles from the Turks who controlled Greece at the time. The ended up in the British Museum.

The MP told the House: "Thirteen years ago, Neil Kinnock when he was leader of the Labour Party, said that the Parthenon without the marbles was like a smile missing a tooth and he pledged to return them to Athens. If it was compelling for the sculptures to be returned then, why is it not compelling now?"

The Culture Secretary restated the Government's view that the marbles would remain in London.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "For the Greeks, the Parthenon is a symbol of their nationhood and their cultural identity. It is a tragedy that the marbles cannot be returned to Greece, where they belong."

The MP added: "I do not believe for one moment that this would be the green light for a raid on our museum treasures. The identity of the marbles as works of art sits in the context of the Parthenon which is still standing in Athens. They should go home."

"Greece is a stable democracy and a fellow member of the European Union. They will be deeply disappointed."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 156/98 Monday 1 June 1998

LOW PAY Ruth

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 157/98 Wednesday 3 June 1998

Minimum Wage boost for Pendle

The recommendation made by the Low Pay Commission of a minimum wage of £3.60 per hour will have a big impact on a huge number of people says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Figures unearthed by the MP reveal just how many full and part time workers pay packets will be affected, over 8% of Pendle people in full time work and 27% in part time work will benefit.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Poverty pay has blighted this area for too long. Wages are so low in East Lancashire even this modest minimum wage will make an enormous difference to thousands of people. The minimum wage will end the practise of scrooge employers being indirectly subsidised by taxpayers through the tax system. Family credit for example goes to people in work but on a very low wage.

The MP added: "£3.60 is just the recommendation and I will be pressing the Government for a higher rate."

Note to Editors: % of employees in 1997 earning under £3; £3.50 and £4.00 per hour:

		£3	£3.50	£4.00
Pendle	Full Time	1.5%	8.1%	14%
	Part Time	11.1%	27.8%	30.6%
Lancashire				
	Full Time	1.6%	5.7%	11.00%
	Part Time	7.5%	23.2%	37.3%

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) or 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 158/98 Wednesday 3 June 1998

PHOTOCALL: 2.00 PM FRIDAY 5 JUNE CRAVENSIDE HOME FOR THE ELDERLY, BARNOLDSWICK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be serving refreshments to the residents of Cravenside Old Peoples Home this Friday as part of the WRVS Volunteers week. Mr Prentice is a keen supporter of the WRVS and likes to assit them every year. He has 'wheeled a trolley' for them on many an occasion.

No 159/98 EMBARGOED **until Friday 5 June 1998**

MPs GIVE BARBED WIRE THE BOOT

Four MPs and walkers will protest against the public's continued exclusion from wild moorlands today (Friday). They will tie bootlaces to rolls of rusty barbed wire atop a padlocked gate, daubed in day-glow pink PRIVATE signs, which bars their way. This move comes at the start of "make your mind up" time for the Government. A three month public consultation is at an end and ministers must decide whether to bring in a new law for walkers in the countryside.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "I want to see a new law on the statute book guaranteeing the right of public access to open countryside. This has been an aspiration of thousands of walkers for decades and it is time for the new Labour Government to deliver."

PHOTOCALL Andrew Bennett MP (Chair of the Environment Select Committee and President of the Ramblers), Paddy Tipping MP (RA Vice President) and Helen Jackson MP (President of the South Yorkshire Ramblers) will be joining Gordon Prentice at 10.30am at Grid Ref 115057. Take the A6024 Holmfirth to Holme road (near Huddersfield). Turn off the A6024 at the church at Holmebridge and follow the signs to car park - 3/4 mile down a narrow road.

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP's Early Day Motion secured the support of 200 Labour MPs. It reads - This House believes there should be a legal right of access to open countryside which would allow people to walk freely over uncultivated land subject always to restrictions safeguarding wildlife and flora and the legitimate economic interests of those working the land; believes that ownership by itself is not a sufficient reason to deny access and recognises that there is a widespread expectation that the Government intends to legislate to give the many this right denied to them by the few.

For Immediate Release. No 160/98 Thursday 4 June 1998

GOVERNMENT ACTS TO STOP USE OF ANTIBIOTICS IN FARM ANIMALS AS GROWTH PROMOTERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed moves by the Government to prevent the use of antibiotics in farm animals as growth agents. The MP told Agriculture Minister, Jeff Rooker, that the Agriculture Select Committee in a report published on 22 April said the evidence was almost conclusive that antibiotic resistant organisms could transfer from animals to humans through food. The MP describing it as a "biological Armageddon".

The Minister had earlier revealed that a ban on antibiotics as growth promoters could push the prices to the consumer up by 10 per cent. The Pendle MP called for a return to more traditional methods of animal husbandry saying this was one more example of farming being too important to be left to the farmers.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "People are sick and tired of food scares and food horror stories. This revelation about antibiotics is the latest in a long line. I

want to see a new emphasis on organic crops and livestock." The MP added: "There was never a "golden age" of farming. But now the manipulation of nature is going too far."

Note to Editors: The fourth report of the Agriculture Select Committee (Para 40) reads: "The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food has established a Working Group on Microbial Antibiotic Resistance which expects top complete its report in the first half of this year. We consider the evidence of transfer of antibiotic-resistant micro-organisms from animals to humans through food to be approaching conclusiveness, and with the consequences of this potentially so serious, we favour a ban on the use of antibiotics in farming as growth promoters, and tighter restrictions on their use for sub therapeutic or prophylactic purposes. Every effort should be made to develop vaccines as alternatives to
antibiotics for therapeutic purposes."

For Immediate Release. No 160/98 Wednesday 10 June 1998

PHOTOCALL - Gordon Prentice MP at Earby Mine Museum.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be having a look round Earby Mine Museum on Friday 12 June 1998 at 4.00pm.

For Immediate Release. No 161/98 Monday 1 June 1998

JOANNA McSWEEN - Ruth

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 162/98 Monday 8 June 1998

PENDLE RANKS 99TH IN DEPRIVATION LIST

An index which measures the extent of deprivation in England puts Pendle 99th most deprived out of 354 local authorities in England. The previous index, published in 1994 ranked Pendle 103rd most deprived out of 366 authorities. (The difference in the number of local authorities results from the recent reorganisation of local government.)

In the new index Pendle is ranked 90th most deprived on the ward extent of deprivation, for which there was no equivalent measure previously.

The index measures the percentage of 17 year olds not in full-time education; the unemployment rate, the percentage of households with no car (as an income proxy) and the percentage of children in low earning households (defined as households with no adult working or only one adult in part-time employment).

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "These new figures confirm what we already know. Pendle is one of the more deprived local authority areas in the

country. This index of deprivation will be useful in persuading the Government to put extra resources our way."

The MP added: "We have already been successful with Pendle Partnership's splendid "Youth Focus" bid which will bring millions of pounds into the local economy over the next few years."

For Immediate Release. No 163/98 Tuesday 9 June 1998

"ON YER BIKE!" SAYS PRENTICE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, took to his bike this morning, joining a trail-blazing group of Parliamentary cyclists in the annual Great Parliamentary Bike Ride from Covent garden to the Palace of Westminster.

About thirty MPs from all parties sliced through central London in a multi-coloured column, featuring suits, lycra, and T shirts. A contingent of French MPs, who had travelled across from Paris on the Eurostar, joined in.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "The Great Bike Ride is not physically demanding. In fact its downhill all the way. (No jokes please)."

"Cycling is a great way to get about. Its environmentally friendly and its healthy and its very cheap!"

Joining the Pendle MP on the dash through central London was Joanna MacSween, a student from Barlick, who is doing work experience with the MP.

For Immediate Release. No 164/98 Thursday 11 June 1998

MP CALLS FOR "ALL MOD CONS"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a campaign to get more public toilets - and ones that are fit to use.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The provision of decent public toilets should be a top priority for local authorities yet nationwide their numbers continue to decline. I have had complaints about facilities for babies and children and issues about those suffering from incontinence."

The MP added: "Provision of adequate public toilets is important to many areas of Government policy such as public health, transport, tourism, the arts and the environment and I am writing to the relevant Ministers to see what more can be done by legislation, or by other means, to improve the situation."

"Why can't we have a mobile task force charged with keeping all our public toilets in a clean and hygienic state. Sometimes, the state of public toilets is just too appalling for words."

Note to Editors: At the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1851, public toilets were provided for the thousands of visitors. They proved to be a huge success and the principles were quickly implemented with the first 'modern' public toilets being opened in London in 1852. Over the past 150 years the general public has constantly demanded more and better toilets but the "providers" are still unable to provide them consistently to the required standard. Many councils and transport operators pay lip service to their obligations and provide only basic facilities. As a result these are often vandalised, dirty, smelly and totally unpleasant to use. As a result they are frequently closed down.

For Immediate Release. No 165/98 Wednesday 10 June 1998

VICTIMS AND WITNESSES TO GET A GREATER SAY

Thousands of witnesses and victims too afraid to give evidence to the police or the courts are to be given greater protection under proposals to ensure that more criminals are brought to justice. The changes are being backed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

In **"Speaking Up For Justice"**, a new report published today by Home Secretary Jack Straw, over 70 recommendations are made to improve the way that vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, including children, are treated in the criminal justice system.

The recommendations, which are being issued for consultation until 31 August, aim to encourage people to report more crime and to give evidence in court.

Jack Straw said: "Many victims and witnesses are too frightened to come forward for fear of repercussions to themselves, family and friends. As a result many criminals go unpunished."

"But it is not just the criminals themselves who are preventing victims and witnesses from giving evidence. Our criminal justice system itself can be daunting and frightening at times, especially for those people who may have difficulty in communicating themselves."

"It is time for reform. Modern technology can now help to provide us with solutions to these problems. Video taped interviews, CCTV, pagers and live video links can all help witnesses have their say without feeling daunted."

The Pendle MP added: "Witnesses clearly play a central role in bringing criminals to justice. We must give them all the help and

more follows

support we can to ease the trauma they must feel while preserving the right of the defendant to a fair trial."

Note to Editors: The measures include: a ban on the cross-examination of victims of rape and serious sexual assault by unrepresented defendants; and greater restrictions on the cross

examination of a rape victim's sexual history; new measures to help child witnesses including videoed pre-trial cross examination, communication aids and intermediaries to help them give evidence and understand questioning; escorts to and from court, panic alarms and pagers so that intimidated witnesses know exactly when they are needed and do not have to wait at court buildings in the same room as defendants; live CCTV links and screens for witnesses likely to be intimidated and distressed by being in court and facing defendants.

For Immediate Release. No 166/98 Thursday 11 June 1998

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR DEBATE ON CRISIS AT LUCAS AEROSPACE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon called for an early debate on the crisis at Lucas Aerospace in Burnley where 70 workers have received redundancy notices. The company has decided to quit the market for high pressure cylinders containing compressed natural gas, designed to propel the vehicles of the future.

The appeal to the Leader of the House, Anne Taylor MP, came as a delegation of forty from the plant arrived at Westminster to lobby MPs. The delegation met Peter Pike, who chaired the meeting, Gordon Prentice and MPs from Bolton, Sheffield, Leeds and other parts of the country as far away as Dover.

The Pendle MP told the Commons that Burnley's Peter Pike was with the delegation and was therefore unavoidably absent from the Chamber. He went on to call for an early debate on the Government's policy on clean vehicle technology - well in advance of next month's promised debate on the Integrated Transport Strategy White Paper. The MP told the House that the Lucas plant was the only one in the UK making the cylinders and that the technology was fully developed.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "I shall be working closely with Peter Pike to do all we can to retrieve the situation. Given the importance the new Government attaches to green technology, the decision of Lucas to quit the field is, quite simply, incredible."

No 167/98 Embargoed **until Tuesday 16 June 1998**

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR DTI INVESTIGATION INTO LORD ARCHER'S SHARE DEALINGS TO BE RE-OPENED

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has today called for the report on the DTI investigation into Lord Archer's controversial 1994 share dealings in Anglia Television, netting him a profit of over £77,000. Archer's wife, Mary, was at the time a Director of Anglia TV.

In his Commons motion which appears in the Order Paper which circulates throughout Westminster and Whitehall, the Pendle MP draws attention to the millionaire novelist's claim that he got the idea of buying and selling shares in Anglia from a conversation at a dinner party hosted by Sir Nicholas Lloyd. In fact, according

to Sir Nicholas, the dinner party took place on 18 January 1994 - after Archer's share transactions had been completed.

The Pendle MP commented: "I have written to the President of the Board of Trade urging her to publish the original DTI Inspectors' report and also, in the light of these latest revelations, to re-open the investigation. There are a million questions crying out to be answered. Did Archer tell the inspectors about the dinner party conversation? Did they interview Sir Nicholas? If not why not?"

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP's Commons motion reads: That this House notes that Lord Archer has stated that the inspiration for his purchase and sale of Anglia TV shares, netting a profit of £77,219, came from a discussion at a dinner party at the home of Sir Nicholas Lloyd; further notes that the dinner party took place on 18 January 1994, after the share transaction had taken place, further notes that Lady Archer has claimed that the DTI Inspectors investigating the alleged insider dealing recommended that the matter should not have been taken any further; further notes that Lord Archer claims that he was interrogated for hours by the Inspectors about the share transaction; and, in view of these latest revelations, calls upon the President of the Board of Trade to publish the original DTI report on the share dealing and re-open the investigation.

For Immediate Release. No 168/98 Tuesday 16 June 1998

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANS SHOULD BE JAILED FOR A YEAR SAYS PENDLE MP

The football hooligans who are bringing shame to England should be locked up for a year says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP - who supports Burnley FC and is a former member of the Management Board of Fulham FC - rounded on the "brain dead louts" who are "violent and obnoxious in equal measure".

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Some of these thugs have been given three month jail sentences. In my view that's not long enough. Given the amount of chaos and mayhem they are responsible for, I would go for a year in jail. And the French shouldn't have to bear the cost."

The MP added: "I would bring them back to this country and stick them in the prison ship purchased by the previous Government. A location on the south coast of England would be appropriate where, on a clear day, these pathetic individuals could see the coast of France through the bars of their prison cell."

For Immediate Release. No 169/98 Wednesday 17 June 1998

MP REVEALS SCALE OF CASH INJECTION INTO NHS IN EAST LANCS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has revealed details of the scale of the new money going into the NHS in East Lancashire since the new Labour Government came to power last year. The MP released the figures a fortnight before the 50th anniversary

of the NHS on 5 July.

Figures show that the East Lancashire Health Authority has received £16,187,000 in new cash since May 1997. This includes new Waiting List cash for 1998/9 of £3,184,000 and extra money for Breast Cancer treatment in l997/98 of £85,000. A further £660,000 was allocated to help cope with additional demands over the winter.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The new Government is doing its best to get more resources into the NHS but, clearly, we cannot do everything overnight. But we have made a start."

The MP added: "Celebrating 50 years of the NHS is a chance to reflect and take stock about what has been achieved. Although the great, reforming post war Labour Government created the NHS, it does not belong to any political party, it belongs to all of if us."

"We should care for the NHS as it has cared for us."

Note to Editors: See table overleaf detailing new cash for East Lancashire

MP REVEALS SCALE OF CASH INJECTION INTO NHS IN EAST LANCS

TOTAL NEW CASH SINCE MAY 1997

Major Waiting List Projects across Health Authority area, include:

Ophthalmology 370 additional cases Burnley NHS Trust	£80,000
Additional radiology procedures Burnley NHS Trust	£85,000
General surgery 284 additional cases, Blackburn, H and Ribble Trust	£91,000
General surgery 220 additional cases Burnley NHS Trust	£70,000
Continuation of waiting list schemes due to terminate , Blackburn Hyndburn and Ribble	£576,000
Orthopaedics 200 additional cases Burnley NHS Trust	£440,000
Endoscopy 900 additional cases Blackburn Hyndburn and Ribble Trust	£100,000
Ear Nose and Throat 211 additional cases Blackburn Hyndburn and Ribble Trust	£125,000
Urology 40 additional cases Burnley NHS Trust	£10,000
Orthopaedics 400 additional cases Blackburn Hyndburn and Ribble Trust	£150,000
Gynaecology 435 additional cases Burnley NHS Trust	£180,000
Additional anaesthetic staff Burnley NHS Trust	£193,000
General Medicine 157 additional cases Burnley NHS Trust	£240,000

For Immediate Release. No 170/98 Monday 22 June 1998

GOVERNMENT GIVES CASH BOOST TO ORGANISATIONS CONVERTING TO CLEAN FUELS

Transport Minister Glenda Jackson today told Pendle MP Gordon Prentice that fleet operators, local authorities and others could get back up to half the cost of converting a vehicle to run on a clean fuel - such as compressed natural gas.

The Pendle MP immediately called for a publicity drive to tell the public what the Government was already doing to persuade people to convert their vehicles to run on environmentally friendly fuels.

Prentice has pressing Ministers to do more to encourage the take up of alternative fuels since the news broke earlier this month that Lucas was planning to stop production of the compressed natural gas cylinders made at the company's Burnley plant.

Glenda Jackson told the Pendle MP: "Ministers have spoken about the merits of converting fleets to run on gas fuels on a number of occasions to audiences including large fleet operators and local authorities. In addition. The Government has provided £6 million of funding to the Energy Savings Trust for its three year Powershift programme which promotes the use of alternative fuels like compressed natural gas by providing grants of up to half of the capital cost of converting a vehicle to run on alternative fuel, and put in place a number of fiscal incentives to encourage the use of gas fuels."

Speaking from Westminster, Gordon Prentice said: "Why Lucas should be preparing to leave the market in alternative fuels just when things are about to take off completely defeats my understanding. The market out there will be simply enormous."

more follows

GOVERNMENT GIVES CASH BOOST TO ORGANISATIONS CONVERTING TO CLEAN FUELS

Note to Editors: In 1997, 9,100 vehicles were registered as running on gas or petrol and gas and 17,400 on electricity. Of the registered electric vehicles, the majority fell into the special concessionary group, which consists largely of plant and agricultural vehicles, and exempt vehicles (emergency vehicles, vehicles registered to disabled drivers and vehicles over 25 years old). Of the gas vehicles, 6,700 are private and light goods vehicles.

The Natural Gas Vehicles Association estimate 50-55 local authorities have one or more compressed natural gas vehicles in their fleet.

The LPG association believe that several local authorities are using LPG, along with a number of fleet operators such as bus operators and the police. The Electric Vehicles Association state that a number of local authorities have ordered electric vehicles.

On 11 June, Prentice called for an early debate on the crisis at Lucas Aerospace in Burnley where 70 workers have received redundancy notices. The company decided to quit the market for high pressure

cylinders containing compressed natural gas, designed to propel the vehicles of the future. The Pendle MP made his appeal to the Leader of the House, Anne Taylor MP, as a delegation of forty employees from the plant arrived at Westminster to lobby MPs. The delegation met Peter Pike, who chaired the meeting, Gordon Prentice and MPs from Bolton, Sheffield, Leeds and other parts of the country as far away as Dover.

For Immediate Release. No 171/98 Wednesday 17 June 1998

MINISTER GIVES GO-AHEAD FOR SPENDING ON PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS

The Housing Minister, Hilary Armstrong, has given the green light for spending on Pendle's dilapidated private sector housing stock. The decision follows a Ministerial visit to Pendle on 28 February and a deputation led by the MP which pressed the case for cash.

In her letter to the MP, the Minister says the renewal of the private sector stock is a first priority and the council's capital allocation can be devoted "to meeting the council's 40% contribution towards the cost of making grants for the renewal of private sector housing".

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, the Leader of Pendle Council and the Chief Executive made a bid to safeguard the Borough's housing programme when they saw the Minister at the London HQ of the Department of the Environment, Regions and Transport last April.

At the time, Gordon Prentice talked of the importance of the Minister seeing for herself "the unique cocktail of problems and challenges facing the Borough." Speaking from Westminster, after the Minister's decision, the MP said: "This is splendid news. We have some of the oldest and most run down housing in the entire country and we need help to puts things to right."

The MP added: "There was a technical hitch involving the new Government's "capital receipts initiative" amounting to £810,000 which had to be used on "new initiatives". The Borough quite rightly wanted to use the cash to support the existing housing programme. That was my view and that is now going to happen."

Note to Editors: The Minister's letter is attached.

For Immediate Release. No 172/98 Thursday18 June 1998

MP BACKS GOVERNMENT ACTION ON BIODIVERSITY.

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice today welcomed the Government’s consultation paper into ‘Making Biodiversity Happen.’

The red MP, with green credentials, who is a member of the All Party Gardening Club, said: “Biodiversity is under threat. The U.K has lost over 100 species in the past century including animals like the dormouse, which is now extinct in seven counties.”

The MP added: “Biodiversity should concern everyone. Self evidently, all our food comes from the world around us. We need the greatest variety of animal, plant, insect, and marine life to sustain us.”

“Pendle is not immune to these problems of loss of biodiversity. Habitats everywhere are threatened and its good news the issue is being taken seriously.”

Copies of the consultation paper can be obtained from the following address by 24th July.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.
DETR Free Literature,
PO Box No. 236,
Wetherby LS23 7NB.

For Immediate Release No 173/98 Thursday 18 June 1998

PHOTOCALL - Gordon Prentice MP at Nelson Packaging, Townsley Street, Nelson.

Gordon Prentice MP, will be visiting local firm Nelson Packaging on Friday 19 June 1998 at 11.00am. The MP will be taking a look at the production facilities and talking to management about the issues currently affecting the packaging industry.

For Immediate Release. No 173/98 Thursday 18 June 1998

PENDLE JOBLESS FIGURES SLIGHTLY DOWN

The number of people out of work and claiming Jobseekers Allowance last month stood at 1,367 - 3.7% of the workforce. 1,087 men were out of work (5%) and 280 women (1.8%). There were 202 vacancies notified to the Job Centre in Colne and 350 at Nelson.

The jobless totals show a small fall in unemployment - down from 1,416 in April (3.8%),

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "Nationally figures are set to rise but here in Pendle the figures have remained fairly static throughout 1998,"

For Immediate Release. No 174/98 Thursday 18 June 1998

GOVERNMENT TO CRACK DOWN ON ANTI-SOCIAL TENANTS AND BAD LANDLORDS

Housing Minister, Hilary Armstrong, has told local MP, Gordon Prentice, that the Government is preparing to crack down on anti-social tenants and bad landlords. In a letter to the Pendle MP the Minister says a person causing their neighbours misery could get an Order from the Courts which would last for a minimum of two years. Breaching it, she says, would be a criminal offence, with stiff penalties such as fines and imprisonment.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I am one hundred percent behind this kind of robust approach. In my constituency surgeries I regularly witness the terrible effect anti-social behaviour can have on people and neighbourhoods. We need to come down like a ton of bricks on people who intimidate their neighbours or drive them up the wall with repeated unreasonable behaviour."

The MP continued: "We also need to tackle the bad landlord who allows his or her properties to fall into a state of decay while, at the same time, scooping a small fortune in rent which comes from public funds through the housing benefit system. We have far too many of these landlords in Pendle already."

The MP added: "We are looking at housing benefit abuses at the moment and the Government will be unveiling its reform plans later in the year. The present system is a complete racket."

Note to Editors: The Housing Minister visited Pendle in February this year. Her letter to the Pendle MP, dated 17 June, reads: "As you know, as part of the Crime and Disorder Bill currently passing through Parliament, the Home Secretary has proposed the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour

more follows

ANTI-SOCIAL TENANTS AND BAD LANDLORDS

Orders to protect the community from the actions of individuals who cause nuisance through their anti-social behaviour. This would enable local authorities and the police to seek an Order from the courts to prohibit an individual from taking action which caused innocent people fear and distress. An Order would last for a minimum of two years. Breaching it would be a criminal offence, with stiff penalties such as fines and imprisonment.

Where landlords are not prepared to take possession action against anti-social tenants, local authorities already have a duty under section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to investigate complaints about noise and other nuisances by either owner occupiers or tenants. If the local authority's environmental health officer considers a problem to be a Statutory nuisance, the authority can serve an abatement notice on the person responsible for the nuisance or the owner or occupier of the premises.

Local authorities also have a number of powers they can use to tackle unfitness. Under the Housing Act 1985, they can serve a repair notice on a landlord requiring repairs to be carried out within a specified period or they may carry out repairs to the property and, if necessary, recover the expenses from the landlord. In extreme cases an authority can serve a closing or demolition order on the property. Authorities also have powers under the Building Act 1984 to deal with properties in serious disrepair and there are powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for them to deal with statutory nuisances caused by structural defects. Authorities can, of course, compulsorily purchase a property in extreme circumstances.

Some of the worst stock conditions and management practices are found in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). We are therefore firmly committed to introducing a national mandatory licensing system for this type of accommodation. We will not have the opportunity to legislate in the current

Parliamentary session but we are currently examining options for such a system and will be issuing a consultation paper in due course.

Although HMOs account for many of the worst properties, I appreciate that there is still too much sub-standard accommodation and bad management elsewhere in the bottom end of the market. We will certainly want to address these problems as we develop and implement our proposals for HMOs.

You may be interested to know that the Law Commission published a report in 1996 recommending legislation to specify more clearly landlords' and tenants' responsibilities for the state of repair and fitness of rented properties. The report recommended implying into new leases a term making landlords responsible for keeping the property fit for human habitation for the whole period of the lease. We are currently undertaking a review of the fitness standard and will address the Law Commission's recommendation following the outcome of the review, alongside decisions on the fitness standard and enforcement procedures."

For Immediate Release. No 175/98 Thursday 18 June 1998

WATER WATCHDOG WARNS OF BIG PRICE HIKES

The water watchdog for Lancashire - the North West Customer Service Committee - has warned local MP, Gordon Prentice that prices throughout the region could increase dramatically.

The CSC Chairman, Maurice Terry, told the Pendle MP today "that customers in the region will find further rises in water and sewerage charges intolerable". He wants North West MPs to act to prevent big price rises with "unquantified environmental benefits".

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "The water industry in the North West needs to clean up its act and we also want it to plug the leaky pipes and do something about coastal pollution but the customer cannot be taken for a ride. The CSC tells me that since 1989, water and sewerage bills in the North West have risen on average by 45% in real terms and 111% after inflation. That's a whopping increase."

The MP added: "I shall be speaking to North West Water shortly about their plans. The Deputy Prime Minister takes a close interest in the water industry and I know he will be interested in what our local water watchdog has to say."

Note to Editors: The letter dated 18 June from Maurice Terry to the Pendle MP reads:

"You will be aware that Ofwat is presently reviewing the price limit for water and sewerage services. As part of his work, the Director General of Water Services has recently sought guidance from the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Secretary of State for Wales. This was in the form of a letter *Setting the Quality Framework*, dated 30 April 1998. 1 enclose a copy of our comments on the contents of that letter.

more follows

WATER WATCHDOG WARNS OF BIG PRICE HIKES

I feel there are four important points that need to be considered by the Secretaries of State:

• Since 1989, water and sewerage bills in the North West have risen on average by 45% in real terms and 111% including inflation;

• There has been little attempt by the Environment Agency to identify those improvements required by statute and those on a 'wish list'. Nor does the Agency attempt a cost:benefit analysis of improvements;

• Early indications from our own consultation with customers show that they are concerned about seemingly endless increases in prices;

• I believe the debate has been hijacked by polarised views and there is a real opportunity to have improvements to the environment at the same time as lower prices to customers.

It is my firm belief that customers in the region will find further rises in water and sewerage charges intolerable and I would urge you to do all within your power to ensure customers are not penalised with higher prices caused by unquantified environmental benefits.

Yours sincerely,

Maurice Terry

For Immediate Release. No 176/98 Thursday 18 June 1998

PENDLE MP MAKES BID FOR GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR NEW GENERATION AIRBUS

A bid for Government support for the new generation of jumbo sized Airbus was made in the Commons today by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The new Airbus A3XX will carry 650 passenger in double decker style and is due to roll out in 2004. It will take on the elderly Boeing 747 whose design is now 30 years old.

Wings for the current Airbus family are made by BAe in Lancashire.

The MP, a keen supporter of the aerospace industry, told Industry Minister, John Battle, that over the next 20 years passenger air travel would increase three fold and we needed bigger and quieter aircraft to do the job. The Minister said he was in preliminary discussions about launch aid and the Government would scrutinise the proposals as they came forward.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "The new Government has been a good friend to the aerospace industry. We have seen launch aid go to the Airbus A340-500 and to Rolls Royce for the development of the Trent engine. Investment in aerospace is good for Pendle and for the North West and, in the longer term, it pays dividends to UK plc."

For Immediate Release. No 177/98 Monday 22 June 1998

NATIONAL MINIMUM ENTITLEMENTS PROPOSED FOR STUDENTS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

A new report on financial support for further education (FE) students is published today by the Department for Education and Employment.

The report sets out proposals for a new FE student support system. It suggests that there should be national minimum entitlements to help students meet expenditure on items such as transport, books and equipment and childcare. It also proposes that most of these payments should be means-tested.

The Teaching and Higher Education Bill currently before Parliament removes local education authorities' duty to make discretionary awards for FE students. The Government is looking at how to target financial help on the FE students who need it most.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "The discretionary awards system operated by LEAs was a very hit and miss affair. Some students in some LEAs got absolutely nothing. The way the system operated could be very unfair."

Note to Editors: Copies of the report can be obtained by ringing 0845 602 2260 or by writing to DfEE Publications Centre, PO Box 5050, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6ZQ.

The report has been sent to LEAs, colleges, schools, TECs, Careers Services and representative bodies in England, and is available on the Internet on www.dfee.gov.uk.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 178/98 Tuesday 23 June 1998

PHOTOCALL: Gordon Prentice MP will be joining the Burnley and Pendle Ramblers at Victoria Park, Nelson on Saturday 27 June at 12.30pm for their ramble to the Clarion House.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be stepping out on the four mile ramble to Pendle's historic Clarion House in the company of the Burnley and Pendle Ramblers. (Secretary: Jean Kay 866890)

The Pendle MP has been at the forefront of the campaign to secure public access to open countryside.

Note to Editors: The Ramblers Association adds: On 2 June the Country Landowners' Association published its 379-page response to the government's consultation paper on access. We *are* still analysing in detail the CLA's reports on a number of topics, including the costs to landowners and local authorities of statutory access, and of voluntary arrangements. Our preliminary analysis shows that the claim that legislation would cost £2 billion is hugely exaggerated. We have also obtained counsel's opinion which contradicts the CLA view that landowners would be entitled to compensation under European law.

The CLA have produced a nine-point plan for voluntary access (the 'National Voluntary Access Framework'). There is little there that is new and, in fact, it appears that the CLA is hoping to reduce access rather than increase access. A brief commentary on the nine points follows:

(1) Access assessments can of course be carried out now, and the CLA is not proposing to make them compulsory - so no change there.

(2) Open country permanent path agreements are a very dangerous idea and certainly not permanent. These paths are not rights of way, and they are inferior to permissive paths because the CLA proposes that they should be maintained by the public purse not the landowners. So we shall have to pay for them without getting the benefit of highway status. Furthermore, they con be reviewed (which includes moving or closing) every five years, ore available only in daylight, have no certainty in law and will add to public confusion. No doubt the CLA hopes that, in time, all public paths will

be transferred to this new category,

(3) Open country permitted access agreements are the same as access agreements made under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, except they are more flexible in the interests of owners and occupiers - so no new benefit to the public there.

(4) Occupiers' liability - we have already agreed to a change in the law but as part of a package of changes which includes access legislation. Similarly (5) publicity, (6) public behaviour and dogs, and (7) powers for rangers, should all be part of the legislation package. (8) Altering the law on rights of way so that, for instance, landowners can alter the routes more readily, is clearly unacceptable and beyond the scope of the government's consultation. (9) Compulsory powers (ie path creation orders and access orders) to be used only as a lost resort - there we have it; the CLA wants to take away the limited powers which exist to make landowners provide access.

Note 2 to Editors: The Pendle MP's Early Day Motion tabled in February secured the support of 200 Labour MPs. It reads - This House believes there should be a legal right of access to open countryside which would allow people to walk freely over uncultivated land subject always to restrictions safeguarding wildlife and flora and the legitimate economic interests of those working the land; believes that ownership by itself is not a sufficient reason to deny access and recognises that there is a widespread expectation that the Government intends to legislate to give the many this right denied to them by the few.

Note 3 to Editors: The consultation on the Government access proposals ended on 5 June 1998. A white paper setting out the Government's firm decisions on the way forward is expected in the Autumn.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 179/98 Monday 29 June 1998

MP QUESTIONS BIG BONUSES FOR YORKSHIRE WATER CHIEFS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has raised his eyebrows at the big bonuses paid by American owned Yorkshire Water to its Chief Executive Kevin Bond who has scooped an extra £55,000 in bonuses on top of his basic salary of £185,000. He is reported to receive an additional £58,000 in benefits in kind. The company's managing director, Jonson Cox, gets a bonus of £41,000 on top of his £135,000 salary plus £16,000 in benefits in kind.

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The company issued a statement saying it was important that the company attracts and retains the right calibre of director. "This is in the best interests of both customers

and the standard of the service they receive and shareholders in relation to returns that they receive."

The Pendle MP responded: "Since privatisation, most water companies, including Yorkshire, have been sold to people abroad - mostly Americans. They are private sector companies out to make a profit - so long as it is not at the expense of the rest of us. We have a right to expect clean water, action on leaks and a programme of investment from Yorkshire Water to ensure the great drought fiasco of 1995 is never repeated."

The MP added: "By 1997, Yorkshire Water had cut its workforce by 6.5% - down 300. Its annual pre-tax profits were up 22% and the directors remuneration since privatisation was up 72.4%."

Note to Editors: Figures released by the MP in 1997 showed that Yorkshire Water had made £934m profit and paid out £300m in dividends to shareholders since privatisation. The previous Government wrote off Yorkshire Water's debts at privatisation of £559m. In addition the company was given a Green dowry at privatisation of £89m. Yorkshire Water serves about one third of the Pendle MP's constituency.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

No 180/98 EMBARGOED TO: Tuesday 30 June 1998

HOUSE OF COMMONS APPLAUDS NELSON & COLNE COLLEGE'S HIGH FLYING CHEMISTRY STUDENTS

The House of Commons paid tribute today to the young students at Nelson and Colne College who have won the prestigious Analyst Competition promoted by the Royal Society of Chemistry. The College won the award last week beating over 100 schools and colleges from all over the country.

The Commons motion which appears on the order paper today which was tabled by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, and supported by Burnley's Peter Pike congratulates the winning team of Richard Mole, Helen Atkinson and Ian Edworthy and their teacher Mr Robin Leyland.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the Pendle MP said: "This is a splendid achievement! Full marks go to the winning team and to our local College."

Note to Editors: The Early Day Motion Reads: That this House congratulates Nelson and Colne College on winning the Schools' Analyst Competition organised by The Royal Society of Chemistry's Analytical Division; notes that this is the only national analytical competition for secondary schools and colleges and that Nelson and Colne College emerged as winners from over 100 schools and colleges throughout the UK after successfully analysing a number of compounds found in pharmaceutical preparations that are taken everyday by thousands of people; congratulates the winning team of students, Richard Mole, Helen Atkinson and Ian Edworthy and their teacher Mr Robin Leyland, and applauds the Analytical Chemistry Trust Fund of the Society for its continued commitment to education in schools and colleges.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 181/98 Monday 29 June 1998

MP CALLS FOR SUPPORT FOR "THE NEGLECTED HERITAGE" OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, made a pitch this afternoon for Government support and recognition for historic buildings associated with the birth of the Labour movement.

Quizzing Heritage Ministers and Commons question time this afternoon, the Pendle MP told tourism Minister Tom Clarke that these historic buildings were too often a neglected aspect of the country's tourism industry.

The MP cited the Clarion House as a living example of the Labour Movement's heritage. Clarion House, up by Newchurch in Pendle, set up by the Independent Labour Party, is the sole surviving example of its type. Last weekend, the Ramblers' Association donated £500 towards the cost of renovating the decaying wooden structure.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Clarion House in Pendle is unique. All the others have gone. They were used as meeting rooms and places for social gatherings and they are an important icon in the history of the Labour movement. The Clarion House in Pendle is run by volunteers and is open to all. Walkers, cyclists and members of the general public can take a breath there for refreshments. In the old days, it was a haven for those escaping the pollution of the mill towns and filling their lungs with fresh air."

The Clarion House needs £16,000 to cover the cost of renovations.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 182/98 Tuesday 30 June 1998

MP BACKS NEW SCHEME TO PROMOTE "FIRST CLASS" CUSTOMER SERVICE

Local MP Gordon Prentice today welcomed the launch of a new scheme to reward outstanding consumer services in Pendle.

"Consumers first" invites everyone to nominate their favourite businesses and individuals who have provided real and positive benefits to their customers. Any type of business can be nominated for an award - from a restaurant to a newsagent. Even businesses who deal with companies that have strong consumer relations policies can nominate them for an award.

Welcoming the new scheme, Gordon Prentice said: "We all appreciate good service when we get it, and this new scheme will allow consumers to publicly thank those businesses that go out of their way to help their customers."

He added: 'This scheme will not just benefit those businesses that already have strong customer relations, but will also encourage those companies who are not so caring to try a little harder."

Launching the scheme this week, Consumer Affairs Minister Nigel Griffiths said: "Good businesses never forget that favourites always come first. We hear a lot about the poor service that some businesses offer, but very rarely hear about those businesses that go out of their way to provide a special service. This scheme will allow that work to be recognised and give the people of Pendle a chance to say thank you to their favourite firm."

Note to Editors: For further information and details of how to nominate a firm, contact Gordon Prentice MP on 01282 695471. Applications for the scheme should be submitted by 15 September addressed to the *Consumers First Awards Scheme*, The DTI, 1 Victoria Street, London.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 183/98 Wednesday 1 July 1998

MP DEMANDS END TO USE OF ANTIBIOTICS AS GROWTH PROMOTERS IN FARM ANIMALS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for an end to the practice of putting antibiotics in the feed of farm animals as growth promoters. The MP says there are enormous dangers of antibiotic resistance transferring from animals to humans.

Yesterday the MP asked Agriculture Minister, Jeff Rooker, what was the increase in body weight over any given period of time of (a) pigs and (b) poultry fed a diet which includes antibiotics as growth promoters when compared with the same types of animals fed a diet which excludes such growth promoters.

The Minister said: "Figures from the National Office of Animal Health Ltd which represents manufacturers of feed additives authorised as growth promoters indicate that dietary enhancers improve feed conversion efficiency of farm livestock by between 3 and 6 per cent and increase daily liveweight gains by 5 per cent to 8 per cent, according to species."

The Pendle MP said: "We have to do all we can to make sure our food is safe to eat. And that means taking care of farm animals and not pumping them full of drugs they don't need."

The House of Commons Agriculture Select Committee in a report published on 22 April said the evidence was now almost conclusive that antibiotic resistant organisms could transfer from animals to humans through food. Last month the Pendle MP described the prospect in the Commons as a "biological Armageddon".

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 184/98 Wednesday 1 July 1998

MP MEETS "THE LOST BOYS"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today met a group of previously disaffected young people from Brierfield - the self styled "Lost Boys". The young people, accompanied by Lancashire County Council Youth Workers, Marion Coupe and Mashuq Hussain, were at Westminster to meet the MP and the Middlesborough MP, Dr Ashok Kumar, a role model.

The young people have all been involved in petty crime and in anti-social behaviour and have been under the wing of Lancashire's Youth and Community Service for the past three months.

After the meeting, Gordon Prentice said: "These young people were terrific. In the past they have given people a lot of grief but they are reformed characters! Give them something to do and they'll get stuck into it. They were all very interested in what my colleague Ashok Kumar had to say. I think they found it quite inspirational to hear an MP from an Asian background. Ashok told us in his younger days he knew discrimination. He was told he wasn't bright enough to go to university. He failed his 11+. But he was bright. He worked hard and ended up as a scientist and a University lecturer."

Co-incidentally Dr Kumar was due to present his ten minute rule Bill in the Commons this afternoon entitled: Local Government (Consultation with Young People) Bill.

Marion Coupe can be contacted on 01282 862850/863102.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 185/98 Thursday 2 July 1998

BREAKING THE TRANSPORT TREND

Long term transport trends threaten our quality of life and must be tackled, says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice MP.

Government figures in *Transport Trends*, a new annual publication, show that on average each person in Britain travels 5,365 miles per year by car - up nearly a third over the last decade.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "There has been a marked shift to car use for getting to work amounting to seven out of ten journeys. Car mileage on journeys taking children to school has increased by 90 per cent in the last ten years. And road transport now accounts for nearly a quarter of all man-made carbon dioxide emissions, the main factor in climate change, and is the fastest growing source."

The MP added: "Everyone will gain from a new approach to transport which means that people depend on their cars less and choose to walk, cycle and use public transport more - especially on regular trips like journeys to work and to school. To do nothing

would see the benefits of car ownership eroded by increasing traffic congestion and pollution. Traffic is forecast to grow by more than a third over the next 20 years and by more than half on trunk roads and motorways."

"Motorists have the most to gain from the new approach since it is they who would otherwise be stuck in ever increasing traffic jams. We promised an integrated transport policy to fight congestion and pollution and that is what we will deliver in our White Paper in a few weeks time."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 186/98 Thursday 2 July 1998

NEW DEAL GOES LIVE FOR THE OVER 25s

This week, the Government is giving the over 25s in Pendle a New Deal says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "We are not prepared to have a nation on benefit. We are determined to help more people back to work. The adult long-term unemployed were amongst the most to suffer under the last Government. Jobless rates tripled while the skills of the unemployed were neglected or poorly addressed through inappropriate schemes."

The MP added: "With the extension of the New Deal, those unemployed for over two years will be given new hope and high quality opportunities to re-skill and get back to work. The New Deal for the over 25s will offer employers a £75 per week subsidy for 6 months."

"This approach is already proving successful with the New Deal for young people. The latest statistics for 18-24 yea olds show encouraging progress. More than 15,000 employers have now signed up. Over 5000 young people have moved off benefit and into work since January. And 1 in 4 young people are volunteering to join the programme early."

"In addition to subsidised jobs, the over 25s will also benefit from an integrated package of support provided by the Employment Service. Each person will get a personal adviser who will help tailor a programme of individual support. Overall, the government will be spending nearly a billion pounds on this particular unemployed group."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 187/98 Monday 6 July 1998

PENDLE MP WELCOMES £5 MILLION RURAL BUS CHALLENGE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new competition to encourage innovative local authority rural bus schemes. The 'Rural Bus Challenge', which gets up and running later this year, sees an initial allocation of £5 million a year for three years. This is in addition to the extra £32.5 million a year which already goes to English local authorities in the form of rural bus subsidy grant.

Transport Minister Gavin Strang said: "Our new rural bus subsidy grant should mean a big improvement to conventional bus services in rural areas. But we also want to see local authorities and transport providers bringing forward a broader range of schemes to improve rural transport. "

The Pendle MP added: "The new Rural Bus Challenge will get local authorities and bus operators working together. Challenge funds can be used for either revenue or capital spending and bids will be invited from local authorities later this month."

"Buses are a lifeline for many people - especially in the rural areas."

Notes to Editor: The Local Government Association, the Confederation of Passenger Transport and the Rural Development Commission are being consulted on the criteria and arrangements for the Challenge fund. 2. In the Budget in March, the Chancellor announced new funding for rural transport of £50 million in a year for three years. Of this sum, England gets a total of £41.7m. A Special Grant Report is currently before Parliament allocating £32.5m to English Local authorities in rural bus subsidy grant and setting the conditions for use of the grant. An announcement concerning the £4.2m set aside for rural community-based transport projects in England will follow.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) Commons: 0171 219 4011 Constituency 01282 695471

For Immediate Release. No 188/98 Monday 6 July 1998

MP DUBS PENSIONERS' 25p AGE BONUS
"AN ABSOLUTE DISGRACE"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on the Government to uprate the weekly 25p top-up benefit for pensioners over 80.

The MP told Social Security Ministers at question time it was "an absolute disgrace" that the 25p age bonus had not been increased since it was brought in 1971. The MP said: "If it had of been uprated over this period, the age addition would be worth probably around £1.70 or £1.80."

The MP added: "Isn't it the case that what pensioners aged over 80 really want is a decent state pension and, if we are going to continue with the age addition, it should be uprated or it should be scrapped?"

The Social Security Minister John Denham said the Government was looking into the ways of getting more automatic help to the poorest pensioners. He said: "We are finding that those pensioners, many of whom are amongst the oldest, are going without between 24p and £51 a week in unclaimed benefits and we are taking action on that problem."

Speaking after the exchange, Gordon Prentice said: "What pensioners want above all else is a decent retirement pension they can live on. The extra 25p for the over 80s is absolutely scandalous. It is adding insult to injury."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager) Commons 0171 219 4011 Constituency 01282 695471

For Immediate Release. No 189/98 Monday 6 July 1998

PENDLE MP BACKS NEW APPROACH TO CHILD SUPPORT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, welcomed the publication today of the Government's proposals for the reform of the Child Support Agency. The CSA has been mired in controversy for years.

The Green Paper 'Children First: A New Approach to Child Support' will ensure that where children do not live with both parents, the non-resident parent contributes to the financial support of their children. It aims to be fair, efficient and will be firmly enforced.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "We inherited an absolute mess from the previous Government. People had to deal with mountains of paperwork, make countless telephone calls, suffer incompetence and interminable delays. Today we are promising to introduce a radically simpler formula for child maintenance aimed at providing a top quality and effective service. The current formula for child maintenance is so complex you need to be a rocket scientist to understand it all. This explains why there are so many inaccuracies and delays."

The Government's new scheme is intended to strike a fair balance between the needs of children and the reasonable expectations that parents will be left with sufficient money to live on. For most non-resident parents (those with a net income of more than £200 per week) liability will be a simple percentage of net income. The Government believes that:

- 15% of net income represents a fair balance for 1 child; rising to
- 20% of net weekly income for 2 children; and
- 25% of net weekly income for 3 or more children.

Non-resident parents on Income Support or income based JSA will

more follows:

NEW APPROACH TO CHILD SUPPORT

continue to pay a minimum flat rate amount - currently £5 - to recognise parental responsibility whilst allowing for limited financial circumstances. The lowest paid non-resident parents will pay a fixed amount of child support. For non-resident parents on low earnings - between £100 and £200 per week - the proportion of their income required for child support will be cut.

The Pendle MP added: "The system of child support we inherited from the Conservatives is failing children, parents, and the taxpayer. Not a penny of maintenance is paid for 1.8 million children who are being brought up on Income Support or Family Credit - that's 1 in every 6 children in the country. In addition, a

staggering 40% of fathers lose contact with their children within 2 years of separating. And the proportion of lone parents on Income Support who receive maintenance for their children is no greater now than before the child support scheme was introduced."

Note to Editors: Not a penny of maintenance is paid for 1.8 million children who are being brought up on Income Support or Family Credit - that's 1 in every 6 children in the country. Yet research has shown that fathers who leave their children become on average 15% better off while mothers who stay with their children become on average 15% worse off.

Parents with care on Income Support see no direct gain from the involvement of the CSA. For them, the CSA means hassle - but no cash. The result is that a scheme which never gained the consent of non-resident parents has now lost support amongst the majority of parents with care: • over 70% of parents with care on Income Support seek to avoid making a child support application - up from 40% in 1995.

Parents living apart from their children also suffer. Most fathers say they want stay in contact with them - but contact can be difficult if either parent moves away from the area or finds a new partner: • 40% of fathers lose contact with their children within 2 years of separating.

The Government's child support scheme will: ensure that where children do not live with both parents, the non-resident parent contributes to the financial support of their children; and be fair, efficient and firmly enforced. The current formula for child maintenance is extremely complex. Over 100 pieces of information can be required to make a full assessment and any one change of circumstance can lead to a change in the assessment. This leads to inaccuracies and delays. It also means that parents are unable to predict how much child support will be due and assessments often take an unacceptably long time to make: • 30% of child support assessments take more than 6 months • if parents circumstances change, a new assessment takes on average 6 months

Comments by 31 October 1998. Contact The Child Support Green paper Consultation Team, DSS, 1 - 11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 190/98 Tuesday 7 July 1998

PENDLE MP MAKES ANOTHER PLEA FOR GREATER USE OF COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on local authorities to start converting their vehicle fleets to compressed natural gas - the clean, pollution free fuel.

The MP told Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, at Environment questions in the Commons this afternoon that he applauded the Government's decision to make available a grant of £500 for every vehicle converted to run on clean fuels but he lamented the lack of take up, especially by large fleet operators running vehicles out of depots. The Minister agreed more could be done to get the message across.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "The Government has done a could job so far in encouraging the conversion to cleaner vehicles but we need the fleet operators to start converting now. Next door in Burnley, the Lucas plant is threatening to stop production of the Compressed Natural Gas cylinders - the only place in the UK to manufacture them."

"I am working closely with Peter Pike to do all we can to retrieve the situation which is clearly pretty desperate."

Note to Editors: In 1997, 9,100 vehicles were registered as running on gas or petrol and gas and 17,400 on electricity. Of the registered electric vehicles, the majority fell into the special concessionary group, which consists largely of plant and agricultural vehicles, and exempt vehicles (emergency vehicles, vehicles registered to disabled drivers and vehicles over 25 years old). Of the gas vehicles, 6,700 are private and light goods vehicles. The Natural Gas Vehicles Association estimate 50-55 local authorities have one or more compressed natural gas vehicles in their fleet.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No. 191/98 Tuesday 7 July 1998

PENDLE MP WELCOMES THE ROAD TRAFFIC REDUCTION ACT.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice today welcomed the Road Traffic Reduction (National Target) Acts which has received Royal Assent. The Act requires the Government either to set targets to reduce the overall level of traffic, or to make an assessment of how their transport policies will contribute to the reduction of road traffic. The Bill was steered through Parliament by Cynog Dafis MP (Plaid Cymru) as private member's legisation. The Bill has been supported by the Government through its Parliamentary stages.

Speaking from Westminster, Gordon Prentice said: "The Road Traffic Reduction Act marks a sea change in attitudes. It shows the Government's determination to tackle traffic congestion and pollution. We are facing dramatic increases in traffic and left unchecked, road traffic is forecast to grow by more than a third over the next two decades."

The MP said: "We know that thousands of deaths are hastened every year by air pollution and road transport is now the fastest growing source of carbon dioxide emissions. Motorists are the worst affected. It is motorists get stuck in traffic james and it is motorists who breathe in the most polluted air. But, we must also think of the pedestrians who are also breathing in this pollution."

Gordon Prentice added: "Against this background, the Government will be publishing a radical new transport policy later this month. Our aim is to create a transport systemwhere people choose to use their cars less and to walk, cycle and use improved public transport more. Everyone will gain from the new approach - motorists included."

For Immediate Release. No 192/98 Wednesday 8 July 1998

MP WELCOMES MAYOR TO WESTMINSTER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be rolling out the red carpet at Westminster today for the annual visit of the Mayor of Pendle.

The Mayor, Councillor Colin Waite and the Mayoress, Julie, will be joining the MP for dinner this evening along with Liberal Democrat Barrowford councillor, Richard Nelson, his wife Wendy. Tomorrow the mayoral four-some will be off to Buckingham Palace for the Royal Garden Party.

Later today, the Mayor will be watching the sparks fly at Prime Minister's Question time.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 193/98 Wednesday 8 July 1998

KIDS HAVE GOT TO COUNT SAYS MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed the move by Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett to inject £360 million into the National Numeracy Strategy to transform maths teaching in primary schools.

The MP said: "We inherited a situation where four out of ten 11-year olds could not add up or do basic sums by the time they start secondary school. Using tried and tested methods we are determined to tackle this under-performance. Our national programme of action will ensure that the Government's target of 75% of 11 year olds reaching the expected standard for their age in maths by 2002 is achieved."

The MP added: "The Government's plans add up to a really challenging numeracy programme. Kids have got to count."

Note to Editors: The national numeracy strategy puts a new emphasis on basics: • A daily maths lesson in every primary school from September 1999. • Whole class teaching, including the learning of times tables. • Calculators banned for children up to 8 years old and restricted use thereafter. • More mental arithmetic. • Quality training for every primary teacher on effective methods. • Regular maths homework and support for parents. • Recruitment of 300 local numeracy experts to advise schools from April 1999. • A three-day training course in 1999 for three teachers from every school. • Intensive support for up to 60% of all primary schools This is in addition to the 51 pilot summer numeracy schools running this year. Taken together today's announcement represents a major plank in Labour's drive to raise standards.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 194/98 Wednesday 8 July 1998

LOCAL MP WELCOMES STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the publication of the Government's Strategic Defence Review as a radical and far-reaching modernisation of Britain's armed forces.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP, said: "The Strategic Defence Review reassess Britain's security interests and defence needs and considers how the roles, missions and capabilities of our armed forces should be adjusted to meet the new strategic realities. This is the most radical and far-reaching reshaping and modernisation of our forces for a generation."

The MP continued: "It builds on the strengths of our armed forces, remedies their weaknesses and provides a framework for strong, modern and cost-effective defence, now and for the long term. It is designed to tackle the overstretch we inherited in our armed forces and will ensure our forces are better equipped and better supported. By investing, for example, in air and sea transport and support to the front line, the Review will ensure that we have real forces that we can use, not forces on paper which we cannot deploy as we had under the previous Government."

"The Review will mean that we have armed forces which are more rapidly deployable, more mobile, and also better supported in the field - in short, modern armed forces for the modern world."

The MP also welcomed the big cuts in the number of nuclear warheads carried by the Trident nuclear submarines.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 195/98 Thursday 9 July 1998

MP BACKS MOVES TO INCREASE TREE PROTECTION

Moves to strengthen the system of preservation orders have been backed by local MP, Gordon Prenrtice.

Tree preservation orders are made by local authorities to protect selected trees and woodlands which contribute to the character and appearance of local areas. New proposals will streamline procedures for keeping tree preservation orders up to date; introduce new measures to speed up tree preservation order appeals to the Secretary of State; make new provisions on the payment of compensation under the tree preservation order system; and simplify procedures for dealing with felling licence applications which involve protected trees.

The Pendle MP said: "Local authorities have been using the tree preservation order system to protect trees for over 50 years. It is an excellent system and one we want to strengthen."

Note to Editors: Tree preservation orders are made by local authorities to protect selected trees and woodlands which contribute to the character and appearance of local areas. The cutting down and lopping of protected trees requires the authority's permission. Anyone who cuts down atree without permission is liable to a fine of up to £20,000 in the Magistrates' Court.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 197/98 Tuesday 14 July 1998

GOVERNMENT INVESTS £1.1 BILLION IN SCIENCE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the big boost in investment to transform the Britain's science and engineering base, modernise the UK's research performance, and help fire up economic growth. Yesterday's announcement by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and the Trade Secretary, Margaret Beckett, will pump over £1 billion into the science base.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "The UK's output of world class scientists and cutting edge discoveries is second to none. For years the previous Government under-invested in laboratories and equipment, and in the scientists themselves. In Pendle we need to harness science to create the new, skilled and well paid jobs we all want to see."

This new package includes: £600 million fund for building new and refurbishing existing university laboratories as identified in the Dearing Report; £400 million for the Research Councils to meet the current and capital costs of new project funding in priority areas like life sciences; £100 million from the Wellcome Trust towards a new high intensity X-ray to help keep the UK at the forefront of research on the structure of biological molecules.

The MP added: "This major injection of funds reverses years of decline and ensures that we have a modern and effective science base for the new millennium."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 197/98 Tuesday 14 July 1998

PENDLE MP HAILS PRIORITIES IN GOVERNMENT'S SPENDING REVIEW

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review will make a big difference to Pendle and the North West. He claims today’s announcement stands as one of the most important since the general election.

Speaking from Westminster after the Chancellor had completed his Commons Statement, the MP said: "No less than £19 billion of new money is to go into education over the next three years and a staggering £21 billion into the NHS. But this extra money is tied to reform. All this new investment is to be provided as part of a new contract with government departments to modernise and reform. Fairness, efficiency and decency are to go hand-in-hand."

The MP continued: "The outcome of the Review shows how the new Labour government is focusing on the key priority areas - education and health - but other

areas also benefit. As from next year sight tests will be free for all pensioners and we shall be bringing in a guaranteed minimum income for all pensioners."

The MP added: "This statement is also good news for public transport with investment increasing by £2 billions."

"We are also increasing overseas aid. We all know we live in a global village where distances are shrinking every year. We must do all we can to tackle the problems of poverty not just here in Britain but in the developing world too."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 198/98 Tuesday 14 July 1998

CONSORTIUM OF LANCASHIRE AEROSPACE SELLS ITS SUCCESS STORY TO PARLIAMENT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the high profile exhibition put on by the CLA this week at Westminster and hosted by his next door neighbour, Burnley's Peter Pike.

Leading figures from the world of aerospace in Lancashire such as CLA chairman, Dennis Mendoros and CLA Chief Executive Mike Clifford, arrived at Westminster to advertise their wares and to show what the region can do. Pendle Council's Chief Executive is also at Westminster, flying the flag.

The Pendle MP commented: "This event is very important in presenting Pendle and the North West to the rest of the country. People in the North West can build world beating aircraft, engines and aerospace components but we've got to sell and market our skills and expertise. That's what the CLA is doing this week."

The Consortium of Lancashire Aerospace represents over 140 companies in the aerospace and high technology engineering industries in the North West region. One of its principal objectives is to market the world class technology and skills that the area has to offer.

Note to Editors: The North West is the largest single centre of the UK aerospace industry, representing a quarter of the total UK aerospace output, The region's unique know how and skills base is unsurpassed in the UK. The area produces £4 billion in aerospace turnover per annum and the industry supports over 60,000 jobs in the region.

The Consortium's membership covers all areas of aerospace activity, from the prime contractors, such as British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce, right through the supply chain to small subcontractors. All types of aerospace products and services are supplied by the Consortium's membership.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 199/98 Wednesday 15 July 1998

MP WELCOMES MORE CASH FOR EDUCATION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice. has welcomed the £19 billion boost in investment in education over the next three years - the biggest increase in education investment ever.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "The real terms increase in spending on education across the UK over the next three years will be almost 16% - an average of more than 5% a year - and in cash terms an increase of 25%."

"Our school system was failed by the Conservatives during the 18 years they were in power. In the last Parliament they managed an average real terms increase of just 1.4% per year. In the three years to 1997, they reduced the amount they allocated to education year on year. Inevitably class sizes rose year on year.
The new Government's spending proposals mean an increase of £300 per pupil, over and above what the Conservatives would have spent had they won the last election."

The MP added: "We shall see a doubling of capital investment in school buildings and equipment and the biggest ever expansion of nursery education."

Note to Editors: The number of three year olds in nursery education will double by 2002. This will increase from 34% to 66% the proportion of three year olds in education and will mean 190,000 extra free places to be delivered by existing Early Years Development partnerships of LEAs, private nurseries and playgroups.

A new UK wide, £540m Sure Start programme - a cross departmental initiative - will co-ordinate childcare, nursery education, family learning and primary health care initiatives for children from birth to age three.

More follows

MORE CASH FOR EDUCATION

CLASS SIZES

On class sizes, a total of £560m will be spent from 1999 until 2002 to bring forward delivery of the class size pledge, including £240m from phasing out Assisted Places. £160m of this will provide over 2,000 extra classrooms and £400m over 3 years will provide 6,000 extra teachers. In addition, this year's spending of £62 million will ensure that 100,000 fewer infants are in classes over 30 and that 600 extra classrooms are built.

These resources will enable local education authorities and diocesan bodies, where they wish to, to meet the pledge in September 2000 - 18 months earlier than our promise to the British people.

SCHOOLS CAPITAL

Additional capital - rising to £1650m in 2001-02 - will be invested to improve school buildings and equipment. This will more than double the investment in 1996-97.

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

An additional £535m will be invested in further and higher education in 1999-2000. This means an extra £255m for further education colleges and their students and an extra £280m for universities and their students.

As well as the £1.1bn boost for scientific research announced by the President of the Board of Trade on Monday, the DfEE will also make available an additional £50 million in 1999-00 with further resources in the following years.

The money gained from the changes in student fees and maintenance will be spent on supporting improved access and higher standards in further and higher education. This will mean at least 500,000 more students in further and higher education by 2002.

A pilot will be set up to test the effectiveness of an Education Maintenance Allowance, payable to 16-18 year olds from low-income households, to help more stay on and achieve in post-16 education and training.

NEW DEAL

On top of the money being spent this year, in the next three years there will be £2.5 billion available for the New Deal for the unemployed.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0941 111249 (pager)

For Immediate Release. No 200/98 Wednesday 15 July 1998

PENDLE JOBLESS FIGURES REMAIN STABLE

The number of people out of work and claiming Jobseekers Allowance last month stood at 1364 - 3.7% of the workforce.
1073 men were out of work (4.9%) and 291 women (1.9%).
There were 144 vacancies notified to the Job Centre at Colne and 259 at Nelson.

The jobless totals show a very small fall in unemployment - down from 1367 in May (3.7%).

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: “UK businesses are joining the Government’s programme to tackle unemployment. Fifteen of Britain’s major companies have this week signed up to the New Deal for unemployed people. It is early days yet to see the programme having an effect on the unemployment figures but the signs are encouraging.”

For Immediate Release. No 201/98 Wednesday 15 July 1998

MP CONDEMNS POLAR BEAR HUNTING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, was fuming after learning that American trophy-hunters were back in the Canadian Artic hunting the world’s largest carnivore for the first

time in 25 years after America lifted import laws on hides of some endangered species.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said: “These murderers go out to shoot the Polar Bear to display the hides in their homes. Their aim is to complete whats known as the ‘Bear Slam’, a skin from each of the four largest bears - the grizzly, the black, the brown and the polar.”

The MP continued: “Protected status for bears should be imposed and enforced to stop this senseless killing. Since 1972, when the polar bear was listed as an endangered species, Americans have not been able to import skins. In the past 12 months the controls have been lifted. I am calling on the Government to put pressure on the United States to re-instate the ban on the import of hides of these endangered species.”

For Immediate Release. No 202/98 Thursday 16 July 1998

MP MAKES BID FOR MORE NHS DENTISTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, made a bid for more NHS dentists when he told Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, in the Commons this afternoon that North East Lancashire was a "dental desert".

Prentice told the Health Secretary that his local Health Authority in North East Lancashire was advertising for dentists in Scandinavia. Frank Dobson said that the new cash injection would mean 7,000 additional doctors and up to 15,000 extra nurses in the course of the next three years but he was unable to put a figure on the number of extra dentists. However, Dobson said 250,000 more people had been seen by an NHS dentist since last year's General Election.

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "Our children's teeth here in North East Lancashire are the worst in England so it is a top priority to get some of the £21 billion earmarked for NHS dentistry. I shall be working closely with the Health Authority and the Department of Health to make sure we get our fair share of this incredible cash bonanza for the NHS."

Note to Editor: The Comprehensive Spending Review allocates health and social services an extra £21 billion over the next three years - the biggest cash increase ever announced for the NHS. This investment will help deliver the pledge to reduce waiting lists to 100,000 below the level inherited. Other improvements include: *charges scrapped for pensioner's eye checks; *a £5 billion NHS Modernisation Fund, improving hospitals and GPs' premises; *giving everyone access to a 24 hour nurse-led telephone advice line - 'NHS Direct'; *the largest ever hospital building programme; * increasing independence and dignity for adults who need long-term social services support; *improving the efficiency of the NHS and social services by some 3% a year - improved co-operation will help keep older people out of hospital.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 203/98 Monday 20 July 1998

GOVERNMENT ORDERS INSPECTION OF MANSFIELD

Schools Minister, Stephen Byers, has ordered a special inspection of the troubled Mansfield School in Brierfield, calling in the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, to report by the end of August. In a letter to Woodhead, the Minister admits to serious concerns that recent events at the school "may have had an adverse effect on educational provision there".

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "I welcome this intervention by Ministers. Clearly, things at Mansfield are not as they should be. We all need reassurance that the children's education is not suffering as a result of all the turmoil."

Note to Editors: On 17 July, the Education Minister Stephen Byers wrote to the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, as follows: We have serious concerns that recent events at Mansfield High School, Brierfield, Lancashire, may have had an adverse effect on educational provision there.

The LEA has suspended the school's delegated budget as from 10 July. This follows the Department's decision to remove Technology College designation because of improper sponsorship arrangements. There has also been an investigation by the LEA of tendering procedures and VAT irregularities, and the Police have been involved. The headteacher and the school's business manager have been suspended, and a deputy head is suspended on separate grounds. The management of the school has been seriously disrupted and we need assurance that the school will be able to operate effectively in the new school year.

I am therefore writing to request that you provide advice about the quality of education being provided at the school, and the prospects for stability given the current management situation there. The summer term has already ended but the new term resumes on 10 August for four weeks followed by a two week break. I should therefore be grateful if your advice could be provided to the Secretary of State by the end of August.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 204/98 Monday 20 July 1998

MP "NO WISER THAN BEFORE" FOLLOWING PROBING QUESTION ON PRIVY COUNCIL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, confessed to being "no wiser than before" following a brief exchange this afternoon with Ann Taylor MP - aka Lord President of the Council.

The inquisitive Pendle MP wanted to know why the work of the Privy Council is cloaked in secrecy - with Privy Counsellors having to swear an oath to keep their lips sealed forever. The MP asked how this squared with the Government's commitment to Freedom of Information legislation.

Speaking afterwards, the disappointed MP resolved to keep shining a light "on the secret corners of the constitution". He said: "I am afraid the Lord President, who chairs the Privy Council, gave me the brush off and I got no answer at all. She said she envisaged no change in the workings of the Privy Council yet it is as plain as a pikestaff that the work of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is going to increase after devolution when it will be called upon to adjudicate on the vires (or competence) of Edinburgh legislation."

The MP mused: "Britain's unwritten constitution is a weird and wonderful thing."

Note to Editors: The Privy Council dates back to the 14th century. The present one dates from 1708, after the union of the Parliaments. Privy Counsellors are sworn "to keep secret all matters revealed to them". The appointment is for life although it is possible to resign (as Jonathan Aitken has done). Halsbury's Laws of England describes it as "a secondary legislative chamber complementary to Parliament. An Order in Council gives the force of law to acts of the Government.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) give pager number 819338 and leave message. Commons 0171 219 4011.

For Immediate Release. No 206/98 Tuesday 21 July 1998

MP BACKS ENHANCED ROLE FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing for Community Health Councils (CHCs) to be given a bigger say in how the NHS delivers services locally. Speaking from Westminster, he says CHCs have a key role to play in being the brokers between patients and the NHS.

The MP was speaking at a meeting of the North West Group of Labour MPs with representatives of the North West Regional Association of Community Health Councils led by their chairwoman, Eileen Scott.

The Pendle MP said: "I want to see the CHCs play a much more active role in the Nursing Homes sector which has mushroomed in growth in recent years. The Regional Association told us there are 180,000 beds in over 5,000 nursing homes and the CHCs should have the right to represent the vast majority of residents funded by social services who are currently excluded. Many of those poeple are likely to be vulnerable and disadvantaged with no family support. At the moment, the CHCs can only act for those patients funded by the NHS."

The MP added: "In the past, many such residents would have been cared for in NHS hospitals and would have had automatic access to help, advice or representation by their local CHC."

"The CHCs want to be given an extended right to represent all nursing home residents on an equal footing. I agree and I am raising the issue with health Ministers."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 207/98 Thursday 23 July 1998

NEW "EURO MORTGAGES" MAY TEMPT HOMEBUYERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has predicted a move by many homebuyers into "Euro mortgages" as from next year when the new currency gets off the ground. From 1999 he says banks and other lenders will be offering mortgages not in sterling but in the new Euro.

In the Commons today the MP told Treasury Minister Alistair Darling that if Euro interest rates were significantly lower than sterling then people could switch and save a fortune on repayments.

The Pendle MP predicted French, German and Dutch banks amongst others could easily put ads in the UK press, tempting borrowers with low interest repayments on Euro mortgages. The Minister said the impact in the UK would be minimal.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "I felt the Minister's reply was rather dismissive and it may well be that Euro mortgages will be for a small number of financially sophisticated people with pots of money. However, we are in a single market and if it is possible to borrow cheaply in the Euro then people may do just that. It might prove to be a very attractive option."

Note to Editors: The financial markets currently indicate that it will be significantly cheaper to borrow money denominated in euros than in sterling. Currently, even 20-year UK government bonds show a half per cent premium over similar loans to the "in" countries. For a UK family taking out a mortgage, one denominated in euros may have a lower rate of interest attached to it. However, the repayments will be denominated in euros and be paid out in sterling. If sterling declines in value against the Euro then this will increase the cost of the repayments.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 208/98 Wednesday 22 July 1998

MP CALLS FOR ACTION TO PROTECT TEXTILES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves at Westminster to protect the textile finishing sector from duties on cotton imports, imposed by the European Commission. The European Union determines trade policy for all member states.

The Pendle MP is supporting a Commons motion tabled by Chorley MP, Lindsay Hoyle, which supports the British Government's opposition to EU imposed duties on cotton imports from China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey. The motion claims that up to 7,000 jobs in the UK textile finishing sector are at risk.

Speaking from Westminster the Pendle MP said: "The UK is not alone in resisting these duties on the raw material needed by so many of our local firms. Eight other member states take exactly the same view."

The Pendle MP is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Clothing, Textiles and Footwear Group.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 209/98 Wednesday 22 July 1998

MP BACKS NEW ROLE FOR HIGHWAYS AGENCY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has backed the new and expanded role the Government has given the Highways Agency as the operator for England's motorway and trunk road network.

The MP was speaking after the publication of the much trailed Integrated Transport White Paper. The MP said: "The Agency will have new responsibilities to keep traffic moving by managing the network. We want to get the best out of what we have rather than carpet the countryside with tarmac. We want the Agency to work closely with rail and bus operators to encourage people to switch to public transport alternatives - where these exist."

The MP added: "The new Transport White Paper is a breath of fresh air in transport policy thinking. For years we have had to put up with ever increasing pollution and rising levels of asthma, particularly in children. We want to see environmentally friendly transport which doesn't poison our environment and asphyxiate people."

Notes to Editors The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions, which manages, maintains and improves the network of trunk roads and motorways in England on behalf of the Secretary of State. It works closely with rail, coach, bus, water and air operators, and with local authorities, to integrate its network with the rest of England's roads and other forms of transport. ends

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 210/98 Thursday 23 July 1998

PENDLE MP WANTS WITCHES' DUNGEONS OPENED UP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is launching a new campaign to open up the dungeons at Lancaster castle. They held the Pendle witches in 1612 before they were found guilty and condemned to death for witchcraft. The dungeons which are 30 feet below the present day prison should be put on the tourist trail says the Pendle MP.

The MP is to quiz David Clark MP, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, about public access. The Chancellor has responsibility for the castle which is owned by the Queen although the Home Office has an interest as the castle is also a prison.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "What happened in 1612 was a terrible miscarriage of justice and we cannot right the wrongs of days gone by. But we can and should allow the public to visit these historic dungeons which housed the Pendle witches in darkness and without sanitation from April to August 1612. The lease on this ancient prison comes up for renewal in 2001 and I am pressing the Home Secretary to take the prisoners elsewhere and let the history buffs and the tourists in."

Note to Editors: Lancaster Castle is owned by the Duchy of Lancaster and so ultimately by the Queen. It is managed by Lancashire County Council but is sub-let to the Home Office due to the presence of the prison and the Crown Court on the premises. The villages of Newchurch, Roughlee and Barley have changed little since the 17th century when the Pendle witches, Old Demdike and Chattox, were accused of casting spells among the terrified inhabitants. Rumours brought the local Magistrate to investigate Demdike's home at Malkin Tower, near Pendle Hill. Human teeth stolen from graves at Newchurch were unearthed and a clay image was found. At the trial, chilling accounts of evildoings were brought to light as families accused each other of witchcraft. Ten women and one of their sons were found guilty and were hanged in 1612 in front of huge crowds.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message. Constituency 01282 695471

For Immediate Release. No 211/98 Monday 27 July 1998

MP MAKES DOME VISIT (NOT SENT)

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has made a flying visit to the Millennium Dome which is now taking shape on the Greenwich peninsular which is bisected by the world's time-line - the Greenwich meridian.

Speaking after his visit, the MP said: "I have beeen profoundly sceptical of the whole Millennium Dome project which is costing an arm and a leg."

The MP added: "The sheer scale of the thing is quite awesome."

Note to Editors: The photo shows the Pendle MP centre with George Turner MP (North West Norfolk) on his right and Bill Michie MP (Sheffield Heeley).

The steel cables and fabrication which hold the Dome's canopy in place are made in Bolton.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 212/98 Friday 24 July 1998

MP WELCOMES CASH AWARDS FOR MS RESEARCH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed a new initiative by the MS Society which sets benchmark standards of care which people with MS should have the right to expect wherever they live in the UK. A constant criticism has been the patchy nature of the care people receive after diagnosis.

The MP, who is secretary of the all party Parliamentary MS Group, has tabled a Commons motion congratulating the MS Society for making awards of £10,000 apiece to medical and social services people working in the field of MS symptom management.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "MS very often strikes people in the prime of life. We don't know what causes the disease but the medical researchers are working overtime on this. But being able to cope with the symptoms of MS is just as important and these new cash grants for applied research will, I hope, make a real difference."

The MP is President of the Pendle Branch of the MS Society.

Note to Editors: The motion reads: "That this House congratulates the MS Society for the work it has undertaken in collaboration with the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery to develop benchmark standards of health care for people with multiple sclerosis; applauds the new Measuring Success Award for health and social services providers who meet the standards for MS care in the guidance; notes that winners are eligible for grants of £10,000 for applied research in the field of MS symptom management; and urges the Government to publicise this superb initiative as widely as possible throughout the medical and related professions."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 213/98 Monday 27 July 1998

ROY COULTON'S IDEA FOR A "WHEELCHAIR LOGO" GETS A COMMONS AIRING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Commons this afternoon that he wants restaurants and hotels to say in their newspaper advertisements if they are accessible to disabled people. If so, he wants them to sport the "wheelchair logo".

The idea was first put top him by Pendle's disability rights campaigner, Roy Coulton. He told the MP of occasions in Blackpool when he followed up ads for a restaurant - only to find he couldn't get in. The Pendle MP asked Tourism Minister, Tom Clarke, what steps he was taking to promote the disabled access logo for restaurants, hotels and other tourist facilities.

The Tourism Minister told the Commons: "Encouraging greater access to tourist facilities for all, including those with special needs, will be a core strand in the new tourism strategy which we shall publish later this year. I will take on board the Disability Rights White Paper published last week by the Secretary of State for

Education and Employment. Obviously signs which indicate access would be a positive contribution."

Speaking after the Commons exchange, Gordon Prentice said: "Roy's idea has been put directly to Ministers and I am sure it will be taken up. Like most good ideas, it is simple, straightforward and practical. Ten out of ten."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 214/98 Monday 27 July 1998

PENDLE MP WANTS REGISTER OF LOBBYISTS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says he wants to see a register of lobbyists with Ministers and civil servants noting approaches made to them by lobbying firms.

The MP was speaking at Westminster as the Prime Minister published guidance for all civil servants setting out the basic principles which should be followed in any contacts with lobbyists. The PM was responding to a written question from the Pendle MP tabled a fortnight ago on civil servants and political advisers speaking to lobbyists under Chatham House rules or "off the record".

The Pendle MP said: "Today's guidance is good so far as it goes - but it should go further. I doubt, for example, if the £250 an hour Derek Draper would get on a register of professional lobbyists."

Separately, the Pendle MP crossed swords with the newly promoted DTI Minister, Peter Mandelson at Dome questions this afternoon. He asked the Minister what use he made of lobbying organisations to promote and secure funding for the Dome and in a follow up question said: "You told me in a written answer that you never address meetings organised by lobbyists, and yet there were reports earlier this month that you would be briefing clients of GPC Market Access - and this was confirmed by you. Why is it that these meetings are held off the record, secret? What is it that you will say privately that you won't say publicly? And will you invite me along to one of those meetings and, if not, why not?"
Mr Mandelson replied: "I neither procure nor negotiate sponsorship for the Dome personally and I certainly don't use the services of any lobbying organisation for that purpose."
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 215/98 Monday 27 July 1998

GOVERNMENT PROMISES "FASTER, FIRMER AND FAIRER" IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

Home Secretary Jack Straw today published a White Paper on asylum and immigration, the result of a year-long review of the entire system.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP commented: "The Government is committed to bringing a fresh approach to asylum - one that is faster, firmer and fairer than the chaotic shambles we inherited from the Conservatives. We have already taken action to abolish the arbitrary "primary purpose" rule and have been consulting on the regulation of unscrupulous immigration advisers, who clog up the system and prey on the vulnerable."

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP quizzed Home Secretary Jack Straw about the proposed new "financial bond" which is to be piloted in some areas. The MP told the Home Secretary that every MP had constituents who offered money or some other security to the state to get a relative into the UK with a promise that he or she would return to their country of origin. Jack Straw said the new financial bond would test the intentions of the applicant more strenuously by introducing financial penalties if the conditions relating to entry were not kept.

The Pendle MP added: "We have always said that we would ensure swift and fair decisions in asylum cases. The system we inherited was expensive and too slow. We have a backlog of over 50,000 undecided asylum cases and reducing delays and the backlog is absolutely central to the reform."

"Their will be no amnesty for those with a decision against them, as this would reward lawbreakers and might encourage others to

more follows

GOVERNMENT PROMISES "FASTER, FIRMER AND FAIRER" IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

abuse and undermine our asylum procedures."

The Pendle MP concluded: "In the Comprehensive Spending Review the Chancellor announced the new asylum and immigration strategy with a single budget for support for asylum seekers to ensure that the system is managed more effectively and is better able to respond to changing circumstances. There will also be reforms to reduce the overall costs to the taxpayer of asylum procedures and immigration controls, and to deliver fairer decisions faster and more effectively; services for asylum seekers will now be dealt with by one department rather than five."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 216/98 Monday 27 July 1998

DUNGEONS LIKELY TO STAY OFF THE TOURIST TRAIL

A disappointed Gordon Prentice admitted this evening that his plans to open to the public the dungeons which held the Pendle Witches in 1612 were running into difficulties. The dungeons, which are 30 feet below ground level, held the witches before they were found guilty and condemned to death for witchcraft.

Last week the Pendle MP announced a "new campaign" to put the dungeons at Lancaster Castle back on the map for history buffs and tourists but Prisons Minister, Joyce Quin, said: "There are no plans to allow members of the public to visit these particular dungeons, which are within the perimeter of Lancaster prison. It would not be possible to open the dungeons to visitors without undermining the security of the prison. However, members of the public may visit other dungeon cells in the castle which are outside the prison perimeter."

As part of his bid to open the dungeons, the Pendle MP queried whether the Home Office would renew the lease for the prison at Lancaster Castle when it expires on 2001. The Prisons Minister told Mr Prentice: "The latest prisoner population trends indicate that it will be necessary to keep the prison accommodation at Lancaster Castle in use beyond 2001. However, the final decision will not be made until nearer the time."

Note to Editors: Lancaster Castle is owned by the Duchy of Lancaster and so ultimately by the Queen. It is managed by Lancashire County Council but is sub-let to the Home Office. The villages of Newchurch, Roughlee and Barley have changed little since the 17th century when the Pendle witches were accused of casting spells among the terrified inhabitants. At the trial, chilling accounts of evildoings were brought to light as families accused each other of witchcraft. Ten women and one of their sons were found guilty and were hanged in 1612 in front of huge crowds.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 217/98 Thursday 30 July 1998

PRENTICE BACKS PIKE IN BID TO SAVE LUCAS JOBS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has backed Peter Pike's last ditch bid to secure the future of 70 jobs at Lucas Aerospace in Burnley. The company's American chiefs have decided to stop the manufacture of cylinders for natural gas, used in clear fuel vehicles.

Peter Pike told the Commons in a late night adjournment debate that it would be a tragedy if the production unit closed. The Pendle MP told Transport Minister Glenda Jackson it was "simply inexplicable that the management over in the United States has decided to pull out of the market when it is about to take off."

The MP added: "In the UK last year 9,100 vehicles ran on gas, or a mixture of petrol and gas, and the management at Lucas in Burnley forecasts that the market could be as high as 200,000 vehicles in six years. There is a colossal market out there, but how can we kick-start it? The Government have reduced fuel duty to achieve a differential between clean fuels and petrol, which is good. They have introduced the £500 reduction in vehicle excise duty for vehicles converted to run on clean fuels, which is

good. They have also set up the cleaner vehicles task force, which is up and running and doing a good job."

The MP continued: "We need to set the road fuel duty for natural gas at the EU minimum, like France, and like Germany. We must provide grants to public service vehicle operators to convert to gas - only 50 or 55 local authorities out of more than 300 in the UK run vehicles on CNG. Local authorities nationwide must be urged to convert their rubbish vehicles and other depot-based vehicles to run on this clean, environmentally friendly fuel."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 218/98 Tuesday 4 August 1998

MP WELCOMES CONSULTATION ON TELECOMS MASTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed moves by the Government to tighten controls on the siting of mobile phone and telecom masts. The MP, a keen environmentalists, says the masts are sprouting from every hilltop and, while he accepts the masts are needed in this age of mass communications, he says much more thought needs to be given to their location.

The Government wants to give local authorities an increased period of up to 56 days to consider the siting of telecoms masts under permitted development rights. Planning Minister Richard Caborn, says the proposals, set out in the consultation paper "Telecommunications Development Control", will give people greater opportunity to express their views.

The Minister said: "We want to allow time for greater public consultation over the siting and appearance of these masts - especially in sensitive cases where development would impact upon their amenity. We also propose to increase the protection currently afforded to Sites of Special Scientific Interest by making telecommunications development in these areas subject to similar constraints as already apply in areas such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty."

Note to Editors: Telecoms operators licensed by the DTI enjoy permitted development rights allowing them to install specified telecoms apparatus without the need to make a planning application to the local planning authority. Certain development, such as the installation of masts of up to 15 metres in height, is, however, subject a "prior approval procedure", under which the planning authority has the opportunity to say whether they wish to approve details of the siting and appearance of the installation.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 219/98 Thursday 30 July 1998

MP WELCOMES EXTRA CASH FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Spending on conservation, rural development, and access and recreation in the countryside is set to increase by a third over the next three years, according to Environment Minister Michael Meacher. The announcement was hailed by countryside access campaigner, the Pendle MP Gordon Prentice.

Money for countryside and rural programmes will rise from £128 million this year to £146 million in 1999/2000, £162 million in 2000/01 and £174 million in 2001/02. The extra money comes from the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Pendle MP commented: "The package includes additional £6m next year for English Nature to continue its nature conservation work. This is splendid news and is a real increase of 13% on its £38.5m in 1998/99. Almost £9m more next year for the countryside agency which will be formed from the merger of the Countryside Commission and the Rural Development Commission."

"The cash will be used to promote and conserve the natural landscape, support rural communities and promote access to and enjoyment of the countryside."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 220/98 Monday 1 June 1998

Photocall Bowls Ruth

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 221/98 Thursday 30 July 1998

MP BACKS MENTAL HEALTH CHANGES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed major reforms designed to deliver safe and comprehensive mental health services. New measures include extra funding, a root and branch review of the law, specialist secure units, 24 hour crisis teams and helplines, more acute hospital beds, and assertive outreach teams to keep tabs on people who have been discharged.

Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, said: "Care in the community has failed. Discharging people from institutions has brought benefits to some. But it has left many vulnerable patients to try to cope on their own. Others have been left to become a danger to themselves and a nuisance to others. Too many confused and sick people have been left wandering the streets and sleeping rough. A small but significant minority have become a danger to the public as well as themselves."

The Pendle MP added: "We need a system in which both patients and the public are safe and sound. But this cannot be achieved by going back to locking up mentally ill

patients in long stay institutions so they are out of sight and out of mind. There will be better support for patients and carers including a 24 hour helpline and crisis teams to respond to emergencies; more acute mental health beds and more hostels and support accommodation."

Note to Editors: Expenditure by the NHS and social services on mental health is about £3 billion a year. As many as one in seven adults may suffer with a mental health problem. Anxiety and depression are most common. Around four people in a 1000 suffer from severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia or manic depression. 11,500 people are detained in hospitals or mental nursing homes under the 1983 Mental Health Act.

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For Immediate Release. No 222/98 Thursday 30 July 1998

MP RENEWS CALL FOR REGISTER OF LOBBYISTS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today renewed his call for a statutory register of lobbyists. Speaking in the Commons this afternoon, he told the newly appointed Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, that "lobbyists these days are absolutely everywhere".

The MP's bid for an early debate when Parliament returns after the summer recess was prompted by news today that a report from the Association of Professional Political Consultants had described Derek Draper, the disgraced ex-employee of DTI Minister, Peter Mandelson, as a "rogue elephant" who had "brought the lobbying profession into disrepute". Draper famously admitted he wanted to "stuff his bank account at £250 an hour".

The chairman of GPC Market Access, which formerly employed Draper, has reportedly written to the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Commons and the Lord Chancellor asking for a statutory register to be set up. On Monday, the Prime Minister published new guidance to civil servants on how they should deal with lobbyists.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "The activities of lobbyists should be put under the microscope. I do not want to see people like Derek Draper pollute Westminster."

The MP added: "Derek Draper is unfortunately still a member of the Labour Party but I have written to the General Secretary and the PM asking the National Executive Committee to have a look at things. To be damned by the lobbying profession is quite an achievement."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 223/98 Tuesday 4 August 1998

CRACK DOWN PLANNED ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Government's pledge to tackle youth crime, curb anti-social behaviour and provide better protection from sex offenders is now poised to take effect with the passage into law of the Crime and Disorder Bill.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "This new Act contains measures to help communities live without fear of crime and to ensure that young offenders are diverted from their offending behaviour at an early stage. The measures will be widely welcomed in Pendle. The Act includes anti-social behaviour orders to prevent a person behaving in a way likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to others. There are sex offender orders to protect the public from the serious harm caused by sex offenders and a duty on local authorities to implement crime and disorder strategies."

Home Secretary Jack Straw added: "The Crime and Disorder Act is a key part of the Government's promise to be tough on crime and its causes. It will deliver our pledges to halve the time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders. The Act will help to end the persistent harassment of communities and give young offenders the opportunity to change their behaviour rather than settle into a life of crime. It forms the lynch-pin for the modernisation and reform of our criminal justice system and establishes an efficient framework for criminal justice agencies to work together towards a safer society. The Act is both tough and practical, ensuring that all the criminal agencies work in partnership and consider the problems of crime and disorder day to day. It will be a real force in cracking down on crime."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 224/98 Wednesday 5 August 1998

PHOTOCALL: WHEATLEY LANE METHODIST CHURCH,

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining the congregation at Wheatley Lane Methodist Church, Fence for their celebration and dedication service of recent alterations to the Church. The service will also be the opening of the Flower Festival Weekend of which the theme is the Church Calendar.

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For Immediate Release. No 225/98 Wednesday 5 August 1998

PHOTOCALL: - PENDLE PAKISTAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL DINNER AT THE CIVIC THEATRE, STANLEY STREET, NELSON. 8 AUGUST 1998 AT 6.00PM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be one of the guests of honour at the PPWA Annual Dinner this Saturday. The occasion will also include the launch of the "Learning from each other" Project, funded by the National Lottery Charities Board. Mr Prentice said: "The PPWA makes an enormous contribution in Pendle as an advisory service. The Annual Dinner is a marvellous occasion which I am looking forward to enormously."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 226/98 Wednesday 5 August 1998

PHOTOCALL: COLNE CRICKET CLUB, THE HORSFIELD, COLNE 9 AUGUST 1998 3.00PM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be hoping not to be on a sticky wicket when he watches Colne versus East Lancs in the final of the Worsley Cup this Sunday. The last time that Colne won the trophy was back in 1969 although they did make the final in the mid eighties.

Gordon Prentice said, "The forecast for this weekend is good and I look forward to giving the Colne team some encouragement although I will be doing this from a safe distance behind the boundary."

The MP is a Patron of Colne Cricket Club.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 227/98 Thursday 6 August 1998

PHOTOCALL: PWA LUNCHEON CLUB, 108 SCOTLAND ROAD, NELSON 12.00pm 11 AUGUST 1998

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be having samosas with members of the Pakistan Welfare Association Luncheon Club next Tuesday.
The MP will be meeting Mr Saghir Ahmed who is President of the Association and other Committee members.

The MP said: "The PWA provide a valuable service to the local community and I am looking forward to joining them."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 228/98 Wednesday 12 August 1998

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP at the Oracle Centre - Primet High School at 10.30am on Friday, 14 August 1998

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be officially opening the new ORACLE centre at the school at Dent Street, Colne, this Friday.

ORACLE is the new Independent Learning Centre based in the old library - phase one of which has just been completed. ORACLE stands for "Open Research and Continuous Learning Environment" and represents, according to the school's Head, Peter Dixon, "the school's commitment to develop effective autonomous learning for the new century". Phase 2 should be completed by April 1999.

The MP said: "I am looking forward to seeing the new centre. I am told it is a balance between the traditional and modern learning resources - books and computers! One of the aims is to encourage pupils to work independently."

The Centre cost £250,000

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 229/98 Tuesday 11 August 1998

LOCAL MP WARNS OF GARDEN HAZARDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a warning call from Consumer Affairs Minister Kim Howells about dangers that lurk in the garden. The Pendle MP says the belated onset of hot summer weather in East Lancashire will tempt more people into their gardens, unaware of potential death traps.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier this week, the Pendle MP said: "The Government wants to end the dreadful toll of injuries which occur every year to young children. Eight children are killed in garden accidents each year and a staggering 125,000 are seriously injured to the extent they require hospital treatment."

Toddlers drowning in ponds and paddling pools continues to be the biggest cause of child deaths in gardens and, overall, one person a week is killed in garden accidents and 500,000 are injured. The Minister added: "The garden should be a fun place for children to play, but there area few important rules that we must all remember to observe to make sure it stays that way. If you have babies and toddlers make especially sure garden sheds and ponds are secure, there are no open gates near busy roads and no sharp or power tools left lying around. If you have slightly older

children, ensure swings and slides are secure and sited away from obstructions; and above all, know where your youngsters are and what they are doing in the garden."

Note to Editors: The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is circulating one million free safety leaflets through garden centres, GP surgeries and local authorities, underpinned by a series of TV adverts to bring home to parents the importance of garden safety.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 230/98 Tuesday 11 August 1998

MP WELCOMES CONSULTATION ON NEW LOOK PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICES

A major revamp of the Prison and Probation services could result from proposals published by the Government after a year long review by the Home Office.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, who has taken a close interest in the changes to the criminal justice system welcomed the proposals. Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "Crime and its consequences cast a blight on communities. We need to come down like a ton of bricks on lawbreakers but we need to address the causes of crime too. A revamped probation service could be the key and I shall be interested in hearing the views of people in Pendle on our proposals."

The MP added: "The Government aims to modernise and improve the performance of the Criminal Justice System as a whole. This consultation is part of this process. Clearly, the Prison and Probation services are at the very heart of the Criminal Justice system and they deserve all our support for the very difficult jobs they do."

Note to Editors: The paper seeks views on a number of issues including: • the creation of a unified national probation service to ensure more effective enforcement of community punishments and better cost- effectiveness; • re-naming the Probation Service to reflect more accurately its role at the heart of the Criminal Justice system; • reorganising the existing 54 Probation Service areas to achieve co-terminosity with police forces, courts, local authorities and the voluntary sector; • the future role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. The consultation period will end on 27 November 1998.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 231/98 Wednesday 12 August 1998

SURVEY OF THE GAUL SHOULD REVEAL THE MYSTERY OF THE SHIP'S SINKING says MP

The mystery surrounding the sinking of the trawler Gaul in February 1974 could soon be cleared up once and for all says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP, whose constituent Sheila Doone from Brierfield, is the widow of the trawler's radio operator, John Doone, has been pressing for years for an official

inquiry into the tragedy. He hopes the survey of the wreck will close a chapter on the story of the Gaul whose sinking claimed the lives of 36 seafarers.

A Board of Trade inquiry 23 years ago - before the wreck was located - concluded that the trawler sank in heavy seas with the entire crew lost. Many people suspected a cover up, saying the trawler was used by the Ministry of Defence as a spy ship keeping tabs on the Soviet fleet.

Note to Editors: The survey ship, the Mansal 18, arrived over the Gaul at approximately 1400 hrs local time on Sunday 9 August. The wreck was located - in the expected position, some 60 miles north of North Cape - at about 1700 hrs during an eight-hour sonar scan of the sea bed. The scan revealed good sonar pictures of the Gaul and the sea bed, and of nets - mostly from other trawlers - which had snagged on the wreck. A remotely operated vehicle (ROV), with cameras on board, was lowered at midnight local time and confirmed the wreck's identity by sending up closed-circuit TV pictures of the Gaul's name on the side of the vessel. Other pictures have shown the outside of the vessel, the wheel house and debris in the Gaul's immediate surroundings. 24-hour operation is now continuing with the three umbilically-operated ROVs on board sending up pictures of the outside of the wreck and the precise location of the many nets.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 232/98 Wednesday 12 August 1998

LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY MISSES OUT ON BID FOR NEW "HEALTH ACTION ZONE"

A bid by the East Lancs Health Authority for a "Health Action Zone" for the area has failed. Designation as a new Zone brings extra resources. Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, told local MP, Gordon Prentice, on Monday that he did his best "to try to be fair and to concentrate the HA Zones on the areas of greatest need".

The MP says he is bitterly disappointed. Speaking from his office in Nelson, Mr Prentice said: "Some parts of Pendle are more disadvantaged than the inner cities and the health of the people living here can be just as bad. The Health Secretary has told me the NHS Regional Office will be giving feedback to the ELHA on its bid and I have asked for sight of the documentation."

The MP added: "This set-back is, in my view, only temporary. I shall be battling for more cash from central Government to tackle the health inequalities that blight East Lancashire."

Note to Editors: On 10 August Frank Dobson wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: "Following the announcement last year of the first eleven Health Action Zones, your health authority, along with 31 others, submitted an application for inclusion in the second wave second wave. I'm sorry to have to let you know that the application was not successful. It was very difficult to select the fifteen eventually chosen but I did my best to try to be fair and to concentrate the HA Zones on the areas of greatest need.

We have not yet decided to proceed with a third wave of Health Action Zones and we will make an announcement some time next year. In the meantime, the NHS Regional Office will provide feedback to your health authority about their application and I hope this will be useful. I know that this news will be a disappointment but the work preparing the HAZ bid should prove extremely useful to the health authority when they are given the duty to develop a Health Improvement Programme for your area."
Contact Gordon Prentice on 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For immediate release 233/98 Tuesday 18 August 1998

GOODBYE FENCE. HELLO GISBURN

The unemployment figures for Pendle will never be the same again. The Pendle travel-to-work area which, until last month, used to have the same boundaries as the constituency has lost Fence and Reedley and gained Gisburn and Rimmington. However, the change in the boundaries used when calculating jobless figures for the area will have little effect on the figures overall says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Last month, the number of people out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,376 - a work force rate of 3.8%. 1,067 men were unemployed and 309 women. There were 317 unfilled vacancies at the Job Centre in Nelson and 226 at Colne.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: 'The geographical area from which the figures are calculated has changed slightly this month. We have lost a bit and gained a bit but overall this won't affect the figures a great deal."

The MP added: "I am obviously concerned about recent job losses locally and I am keeping my fingers crossed that we are through the worst of it."

Note to Editors: There are 225,000 more people in employment since May 1997 according to the Labour Force Survey, and over the last year the total number of jobs, according to the workforce jobs estimate, a separate measure, has increased by 429,000. Employment levels are at their highest since 1990.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 234/98 Monday 18 August 1998

MP CALLS FOR CRACKDOWN ON JUNK FAXES

Local MP Gordon Prentice, is hopping mad over unsolicited faxes that keep pouring out of his office fax.

The exasperated MP said. "These junk faxes are are real pain in the neck. They are using up my paper and clogging up my machine."

"Most of these faxes have no contact details other than an anonymous fax number. In one case the senders have the brass neck to say it will cost £4.50 just to tell them you don't want their faxes. It is a real scam."

The MP added: "The faxes have attention grabbing headlines but advertise complete dross. Recent examples include information of allegedly cheap mobile phone deals and how to get cheap credit. The fax reads: *"Calls to the 0331 numbers cost £1 per minute at all times. The faxbacks are 2 to 3 pages long and take from four to nine minutes.."*

" What a complete rip-off."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 235/98 Monday 18 August 1998

CLARION HOUSE RESTORATION FUND GETS BOOST

Labour MPs have given a big boost to the appeal to save the historic Clarion House near Newchurch-in-Pendle.

Local MP Gordon Prentice says he is delighted with the response from his colleagues in the Parliamentary Labour Party after he wrote to them asking for help. "So far they have given around £1,200 in a bid to save this unique wooden structure from further deterioration."

The MP continued: "The Clarion House is in need of major renovation and structural work which will cost up to £16,000. Just recently the Ramblers' Association donated £500 and other organisations such as the trade unions are pitching in, but there is a long way to go."

Other events to generate cash have been taking place. Last Friday there was a fund raising quiz at Nelson Cricket Club and on Saturday a Wine Tasting event at the Clarion House itself hosted by the Fence, Foulridge and Pendleside branch of the Pendle Labour Party.

Note to Editors: MP raised issue in House of Commons on 29 June with Tourism Minister Tom Clarke. The present and last Clarion House is one of several "Clarion Houses" that were used by the Nelson Independent Labour Party. It was built in 1912 under the direction of the Nelson ILP Land Society. The building project was funded by a loan of £350 from the Nelson Weavers Association. The size of the loan at that time says as much about the size and success of the Nelson Weavers Association as it does about the inescapable relationship that existed between the developing Union Movement and the emerging political parties which were forming to represent "labour" independently. The history of the Clarion House has been written by Roger Brown and the late Stan Iveson, entitled "Clarion House - A Monument to a Movement".
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 236/98 Monday 1 September 1998

COUNCILS GET NEW FREEDOM TO USE CAPITAL RECEIPTS

Local councils could benefit from an additional £250m a year for investment in local capital projects as a result of new regulations which come into force today, 1 September.

The move has been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice, who says the move will give councils new flexibility in managing their finances. He said: "I know my council in Pendle has been trying to make its assets work harder - but it is not easy in the current economic climate. It is not obviously a seller's market in the area."

The regulations mean that councils can use all of the proceeds from selling capital assets, other than council housing and associated land, for reinvesting locally. At the moment, councils have to set aside half of this money to repay debt.

Environment Minister Nick Raynsford added: "This move gives councils greater freedom to spend their resources as they wish. It increases the incentive for them to sell assets they no longer need and will encourage greater local investment."

The new regulations were laid before the House on 10 August following a period of consultation with local authorities, the Local Government Association and other interested parties.

Notes to Editor: Section 59 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to set aside part of their capital receipts as provision for meeting debt and credit liabilities. It prescribes a reserved part of 75% in the case of receipts from sales of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings and 50% for other assets. The new regulations will abolish set-aside on most assets held outside the HRA.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 237/98 Thursday 3 September 1998

MP WELCOMES COMMONS APPROVAL FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE (TERRORISM AND CONSPIRACY) BILL

The Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Bill was carried by the Commons early this morning (Thursday) and will go into the Lords later today. The Commons will reassemble this afternoon to consider any amendments to the Bill sent to them by the Peers.

Speaking from Westminster after the all night sitting, the Pendle MP said: "We all hope this legislation will make it easier to track down and convict the deranged murderers who planted the Omagh bomb which caused such carnage." The President of the United States, Bill Clinton, visits the devastated town later today.

The Bill's provisions allow for the opinion of a senior police officer to be admissible in court as evidence of membership of specific terrorist groups. In addition, courts would be allowed to draw an inference from a suspect's refusal to answer questions during the course of an investigation into membership of a proscribed organisation. And on conviction, the assets of individuals found to be members would be subject to forfeiture if they had been used in support of the group or could be so used in future.

Home Secretary Jack Straw added: "Terrorism is a major threat to our safety and our democratic system. It is vital we have at our disposal effective and practical measures to counter this threat and bring to justice those who persist in the use of violence. This legislation will be temporary and subject to annual renewal."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 238/98 Wednesday 2 September 1998

MP BACKS TOUGH NEW FIREARMS RULES

Tough new rules giving the police more control over firearms
licensing take effect this week. The police will now have access to more detailed and accurate information concerning a persons suitability to hold a firearm.

The changes mean that people applying for a firearm certificate are now required to offer two referees, who must support the applicants suitability to own a firearm. The referee must have known the applicant personally for at least two years. Police can also obtain information from applicants' doctors about their medical history, including details of mental health problems.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "The tragedy of Dunblane is imprinted forever on my mind. Deranged or unstable people should never again be allowed anywhere near a lethal weapon."

The Home Office Minister Alun Michael added: "Public safety remains our number one priority where firearms licensing is concerned. The new rules coming into force give the police more information on which to base their assessment of an applicants suitability to own a gun."

"Police can request a full medical history, including details of any mental health problems, before granting permission to keep a firearm."

Note to Editors: The Cullen report following the tragic shootings at Dunblane Primary School criticised the existing firearms licensing rules. The new rules coming into effect today follow Lord Cullen's recommendations.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 239/98 Thursday 3 September 1998

MP BACKS PLANS TO BOOST OFFSHORE WIND FOR ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, wants wind to power the nation's homes and factories. But the MP is pressing for the wind farms to be located out at sea where they cannot damage the landscape.

The MP was speaking at Westminster as Energy Minister John Battle took the UK's first major step towards generating electricity from offshore wind by launching a consultation document on arrangements for incorporating the development of offshore wind energy into the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation Order (NFFO) process. (see notes for editors below)

Mr Battle said offshore wind was one of the UK's greatest and as yet untapped natural, sustainable and pollution-free resource. Gordon Prentice added: "I want to see offshore wind energy harnessed. We can become world leaders in this technology if we work at it but we mustn't blow hot and cold. Our aim is to achieve 10% of our electricity supplies from renewable sources by 2010 and I want a lot of this to come from the blustery seas around Britain. Our waters are very windy."

Notes to Editors: The NFFO is the Government's main vehicle for financial support for renewables during the market stimulation period. The purpose of NFFO Orders is to create an initial market so that the most promising renewables can compete without financial support in the not too distant future. The NFFO requires Public Electricity Suppliers (RECS in England and Wales) to secure specified amounts of electricity from renewable sources. Generators of electricity from renewables receive premium prices for this electricity. The difference between these premium prices and the market, or pool, price for electricity is financed from the fossil fuel levy, paid by licensed electricity suppliers, who pass it on through electricity bills.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 240/98 Monday 7 September 1998

MP FLIES IN TO FARNBOROUGH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting Farnborough International air show this Wednesday (9 September) to give support to the Consortium of Lancashire Aerospace consortium who will be displaying their wares at the showcase event. The MP will also be joining the Chairman and Directors of Rolls Royce for lunch that day. The company's two sites in Barnoldswick are big employers in his Pendle constituency.

Speaking from his Nelson office before leaving for the event, the MP said: “I always enjoy visiting Farnborough. It is a marvellous opportunity to meet the key players in the industry which is so important to us here in Pendle. And it gives me the chance to speak to many of the representatives of the 130 Lancashire firms that make up the Consortium."

"Aerospace is big business which relies on leading edge technology and I want the North West to be in there at the forefront of new developments. New orders - and we have had a good year - mean more jobs.”

The MP added: “The global economy is going through a sticky patch at the moment although aerospace has not, so far, been hit by the turbulence.”

Note to Editors: The Air Show at Farnborough takes place every second year and runs from 7th to 13 September 1998.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 240/98 Tuesday 7 September 1998

PHOTOCALL - LOCAL MP AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, COLNE

Gordon Prentice MP will be joining the Lord Bishop of Blackburn and congregation at Holy Trinity Church, Colne at 7.30pm on 8 September 1998 to witness the licensing of Reverend Michael Hartley as Priest in Charge.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 241/98 Thursday 10 September 1998

Photocall - Friday 11 September 1998 at 1.00pm at the Groundwork Business Environment Association, Trafalgar Court, Nelson.

Gordon Prentice MP will be presenting a certificate to J Rostron Engineering Limited when they become the 60th member to join the BEA Pendle. The MP will also meet BEA Pendle Chairman, David Walton of Silentnight and local BEA Adviser John Fish who will be outlining BEA Pendle activities.

The MP commented: "The BEA Pendle provide an invaluable advisory service on environmental issues to a large number of local businesses. Businesses can benefit from guidance on forthcoming legislation and environmental issues such as waste minimisation and energy conservation."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 241/98 Monday 7 September 1998

MP MEETS THE POLICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting the Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, and other senior officers of the Lancashire Police Force tomorrow (Tuesday) to hear their plans for policing the county over the next year and to discuss current topics.

The Pendle MP, who will be joined by colleagues from other Lancashire constituencies at the Constabulary HQ at Preston, will be briefed on how the Lancashire Force plans to deal with the new Crime and Disorder Act which passed into law in July. The MPs will also be briefed on the HMI Primary Inspection Report on the Lancashire Constabulary which recently hit the headlines.

The MP said: "This meeting with the Chief Constable is coming at a very important time. The Crime and Disorder Act is a landmark piece of legislation which breaks new ground so far as "partnership policing" is concerned. The Act requires local councils, the police and other agencies, in partnership, to conduct and publish an audit of local crime and disorder problems; consult locally on the basis of that audit then set and publish objectives and targets to cut crime and disorder - and repeat the process every three years. The time table for the first audit is very tight with strategy being published on 1 April next year. So there is no time to lose."

The MP added: "We all want to see a visible police presence on the streets to deter crime. And for the tiny minority who steal, mug and rob and commit other crimes, they need to know they are living on borrowed time. The Government is determined to make the criminals pay the price - not the victims."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 242/98 Monday 14 September 1998

MP HAS SUMMIT MEETING WITH COUNTRYSIDE CHIEFS

The Government should give more help to agencies such as the Countryside Commission which are striving to protect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The bid for support came after a summit meeting earlier today on the summit of Pendle Hill with the Regional Chief of the Countryside Commission Elizabeth Newton.

The Pendle MP said: "The North West has some spectacular countryside and it is right here on our own doorstep. The Forest of Bowland and Pendle Hill are designated AONBs where the landscape is as fine as anywhere in England. Relatively small sums of money can make a huge difference. The flagstone path on the top of Pendle Hill is a good example of what can be done. The experimental Bowland Pathfinder bus service is another splendid idea. This, when combined with a programme of guided walks, encourages visitors to leave their cars at home."

The Pendle MP spent the day with staff from the North West Regional Office of the Countryside Commission and with Lancashire County Council's Countryside Ranger Service. The MP visited Beacon Fell Country Park (which gets over 300,000 visitors annually compared with Wycollar's 150,0000) before climbing Pendle Hill to discuss a wide range of issues including the countryside stewardship scheme, path and commons restoration and problems with erosion.

After the summit meeting the MP said: "The air was crystal clear and the view from Pendle Hill was absolutely stunning."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 243/98 Tuesday 15 September 1998

IT'S TIME TO ACT ON FREEDOM TO ROAM says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be calling for early legislation to give the public the right to roam over open, uncultivated countryside - mountain, moor, heath, down and common land - at a rally this Sunday (20 September) in Todmorden. The MP will be joining Environment Minister, Michael Meacher MP, Kate Ashbrook from the Ramblers and Maureen Ludlam from the "Access to Boulsworth Campaign".

The MP, who is a keen supporter of the 124,000 member Ramblers' Association, will tell the rally that voluntary access schemes will not work and it is time for the Government to deliver on its promise on the right to roam. The MP said: "A recent NOP opinion poll showed that 85% of the public support the call for legislation with common-sense restrictions to protect the environment. crops and animals. I don't want to see the Government drag its feet on this issue where there is such enormous public support."

The rally is one of ten events countrywide which have been organised to highlight areas of open countryside where access benefits the public or where that freedom is denied or severely restricted.

The Ramblers Deputy Director, David Beskine, said: "The Bronte moors in the South Pennines are one of the largest exclusion zones in England. This stinging injustice must come to an end."

Note to Editors: A press conference will take place at Todmorden High School, Ewood Lane, off Burnley Road (GR282249) at 12.30pm on Sunday.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 244/98 Thursday 10 September 1998

PENDLE MP WELCOMES DECISION TO GIVE £21m TO HELP BANGLADESH COPE WITH FLOOD CRISIS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed the Government's decision to give an extra £21 million to the relief effort in Bangladesh after the recent devastating floods. The money will go towards food relief and agricultural rehabilitation projects.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said; "Bangladesh has been utterly devastated by these swirling floods which have inundated more than half the country. An astonishing 53% of the land area of Bangladesh is under water. Crops, livestock and homes have been lost, and disease and malnutrition are on the increase. It is absolutely right that Britain pitches in and does everything it can to help."

The MP added: "Just imagine what it would be like if half the UK were under water. It doesn't bear thinking about."

Notes for editors Britain spent around £45m in 1997 on poverty-related projects in Bangladesh.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 245/98 Tuesday 15 September 1998

MP TO VISIT AMBULANCE HQ

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Lancashire Ambulance Service Chief Executive, David Hill, tomorrow Wednesday (16 September) at 12 noon at his Preston HQ to discuss recent developments affecting the service. The MP visits the nerve centre every year "to take a heath check on the service".

The MP said: "Ambulances can mean the difference between life and death so it is an immensely important service for all of us."

"The Chief Executive tells me that the Lancashire Ambulance Service is one of the first ambulance services in the UK - other than a small number of pilot sites - to prioritise its response to 999 calls. It is working to the new Patient's Charter Standard which requires ambulance services to respond to 75% of life threatening calls within 8 minutes by 2001. Obviously, I am keen to see how this works in practice."

David Hill added: "We have been selected as one of only three pilot sites in the country operating "NHS Direct" ands although this service is currently only available in Preston, Chorley and South Ribble we are hoping to extend the service throughout Lancashire as part of the programme to cover the whole of the country by the year 2000."

Note to Editors: Cover is provided for the Pendle area from Burnley, Barnoldswick and Nelson Ambulance Stations with primary back-up from Clitheroe and Altham Ambulance Stations and secondary back up from Accrington.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 246/98 Wed 16 September 1998

VIAGRA SHOULD BE AVAILABLE ON THE NHS SAYS PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says the controversial anti impotence drug Viagra should be available on the NHS. Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "The drug is effective but it is undeniably expensive. Men who are impotent - but can afford to do so - can go private. But what about the others? An astonishing two million men are apparently impotent for one reason or another. And if they cannot afford to go private why should they be denied a treatment which works?"

The MP added: "It is possible to get contraceptive pills and HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) on the NHS so why should treatment for impotence be any different? Men suffer from impotence for all sorts of reasons. Clinical conditions such as MS can make men impotent. Are we to deny a therapy which works simply on account of cost? If so, where do we draw the line?"

Note to Editors: The Company chairman of Pfizer which makes Viagra, Ken Moran, claimed the UK was now in an "iniquitous" position where only those who could afford the drug could have it, while other poorer people in genuine need could not. Despite agreeing this price we are now in the iniquitous position where the product is available to those men able to pay for their own treatment, by getting it on private prescription, but not to other sufferers of erectile dysfunction." The company said the drug would be widely available in UK pharmacies from September 23.

Interim guidance to the NHS on the prescription of Viagra was issued on Monday (14 September) so that it will be available to doctors before the drug receives its expected licence from the European Medicines Evaluation Agency. The Health Service Circular states that doctors are advised not to prescribe Viagra, nor Health Authorities support the provision by NHS Trusts of the drug at NHS expense, until further notice.

Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, said: "Media coverage of this drug to date has created expectations that could prove a serious drain on the

VIAGRA SHOULD BE AVAILABLE ON THE NHS SAYS PENDLE MP

funds of the NHS. If this were to happen, other patients could be denied the treatment they need. I cannot allow this to happen.

"The potential availability of this drug raises issues about the priority which should be given to the treatment of impotence on the NHS. We are seeking further expert advice and will be having further discussions with the manufacturer. I expect definitive guidance will be issued in the next few weeks."

Notes for Editors 2: Viagra (sildenafil) is a product for the treatment of erectile dysfunction. Licensed and manufactured in the United States, it is expected very shortly to be licensed throughout the European Union. A licence application is currently being considered by the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (EMEA), the EU-wide licensing body.

Health Service Circular 1998/158 is set out below

As you may know, sildenafil (Viagra) is in the process of receiving marketing authorisation from the European Commission.

The potential availability of this drug raises issues about the

priority which should be given to the treatment of erectile dysfunction under the NHS. Ministers are considering these issues in the light of available information about sildenafil, including seeking the further views of scientific and clinical advisers, and the manufacturer.

Ministers will be considering all the advice and information they receive and will be drawing up substantive policy proposals within the next few weeks. As an interim measure, SMAC has advised that doctors should not prescribe sildenafil. Health authorities are also advised not to support the provision of sildenafil at NHS expense to patients requiring treatment for erectile dysfunction, other than in exceptional circumstances which they should require be cleared in advance with them.

I would stress that this is interim guidance only, and should not be taken as implying that Ministers have made decisions relating to the nature and extent of any future availability of this drug as part of NHS services.

GRAHAM WINYARD
MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Note 3 to Editors: The Pendle MP is secretary of the All Party MS Group.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 247/98 Wed 16 September 1998

MP HAILS GOVERNMENT DRIVE TO ERADICATE ELEPHANTIASIS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has applauded moves by the UK Government to eradicate the dreadful, disfiguring disease, elephantiasis from the face of the planet.

The MP was speaking as George Foulkes, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for International Development announced that the Department For International Development would join ranks
with the World Health Organisation and the pharmaceutical company SmithKline Beecham in its bid to rid the world of this crippling disease.

Gordon Prentice said: "This appalling disease affects 120 million people in some of the world's poorest countries. That is more than double the population of the UK. And it can be successfully treated for a few pence per patient."

Smith Kline Beecham joined forces with the WHO earlier in the year by agreeing to donate the drug albendalzole, free of charge, until the disease elephantiasis is wiped from the face of the earth. DFID's funding will ensure the drug reaches those who need it.

Notes to Editors: Elephantiasis (Lymphatic filariasis) results in huge enlargement of arms, legs and other organs, and prevents people from going about their daily lives, and looking after themselves and their families. Over one billion people are vulnerable to elephantiasis and it is estimated that 120 million are infected and 47 million have symptoms. One-third of cases are in Africa, one-third in India, and the rest in Latin America, Asia and the Pacific. The disease is transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Transmission occurs when mosquitoes bite infected humans, ingest a microscopic larva, known as microfilariae, and then pass on the parasite by biting healthy humans.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 248/98 Wed 16 September 1998

MP CONDEMNS PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF MANCHESTER UNITED BY RUPERT MURDOCH

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged the Director General of Fair Trading, John Bridgeman, to reject the planned takeover of Manchester United by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB. Bridgeman has the responsibility for advising DTI Secretary, Peter Mandelson, on whether the takeover should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for full investigation.

The Pendle MP said: "Rupert Murdoch's empire is like a spreading stain. His huge interlocking businesses in the media and in sport and entertainment operate against the public interest.."

Written comments on the implications of the merger should be made to the Office of Fair Trading by 28 September 1998. These should be faxed to 0171 211 8916 or posted to Room 312, Field House, Breams Buildings, London EC4A 1PR.

Notes to Editor: When investigating a merger the Director General consults interested parties and takes full account of their views. He also
takes account of any unsolicited representations which he receives. The main aim of the OFT's evaluation of a merger is to establish its potential effect on competition although other possible public interest issues are also assessed where they may be relevant. The acquisition qualifies for an OFT examination because the total gross value of assets being acquired is more than £70 million.

A statutory deadline applies for the final decision by the Secretary of State on whether to make a reference to the MMC. The decision must be taken by 12 October 1998 which can be extended by a further 15 working days [2 November 1998] from the day a submission was made by BSkyB to the OFT.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 249/98 Wed 16 September 1998

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP WILL BE AT NELSON AND COLNE COLLEGE at 3pm on Thursday 17 September for the official opening of the new SME Education and Training Centre.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining Marianne Neville-Rolfe - the Chief Executive of the Government Office North West - and other guests for the official opening of the new Small and Medium Enterprise Education and Training Centre at the College. Ms Neville-Rollfe will officially open the new building.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 250/98 Friday 18 September 1998

MP WELCOMES NEW TARGETS TO TACKLE YOUTH JUSTICE DELAYS

More than half of all cases involving persistent young offenders should be dealt within 71 days by March next year, under new performance targets published by Home Secretary Jack Straw today. The targets have been welcomed by Pendle MP Gordon Prentice. The MP says that justice delayed is justice denied.

Speaking at the Police Superintendents' Association annual conference earlier this week, Jack Straw said the targets should be seen as a further sign of the Government's determination to deliver its pledge to halve the time it takes from arrest to sentence for all persistent young offenders.

The targets, which will be reviewed after 6 months, include:

- two days from arrest to charge
- seven days from charge to first appearance
- 14 days from verdict to sentence.

The Pendle MP commented: "When Labour came to office the average time taken to deal with persistent young offenders was four and a half months, from arrest to sentence. This enormous time lag is simply unacceptable."

"The new Crime and Disorder Act will entrench the partnerships the police are forging with local authorities and other agencies and the new duty to produce strategies for tackling crime and disorder will, hopefully, involve the entire community."

Note to Editors: The new Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduces a range of measures to improve efficiency in the youth justice system including statutory time limits for all cases involving young offenders from arrest to

more follows

sentence, recommendations from the Narey Review of Delay in the Criminal Justice System and measures specifically directed at tackling delay in the youth court. Many of these measures will be subject to piloting before implementation nationally.

A joint circular "Tackling Delay in the Youth Justice System" was issued on 15 October 1997 to the police, courts, Crown Prosecution Service, social services, probation service and education authorities. It set out the Government's objectives and offers advice on immediate action to speed up youth justice procedures and establish fast tracking schemes. Studies currently underway on existing schemes will identify good practice necessary to effectively fast track persistent young offenders.

A young offender is a person aged 10-17 years who is arrested or has an information laid against him or her for an offence.
A persistent young offender is a young person aged 10-17 who has been sentenced by any criminal court in the UK on three or more separate occasions for one or more recordable offence, and within three years of the last sentencing occasion is subsequently arrested or has an information laid against him or her for a further recordable offence.

The police will have a key role to play in reforming the youth justice system through two particular provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act- the final warning scheme and youth offending teams. The final warning scheme replaces the current system of police cautions with a statutory system of police reprimands and warnings for young offenders. In establishing youth offending teams, there will be a duty on the police to co-operate with local authorities, social services and education representatives, with a requirement that each team shall include at least one police officer.

The £250 million Crime Reduction Strategy was announced on 21 July 1998 as part of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. Further announcements about the strategy will be made later this autumn and the first projects are planned to get underway from next April.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 251/98 Tuesday 22 September 1998

BIG TOWN HALL SHAKE-UP ON THE WAY says PRENTICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says big changes are on the way which could dramatically change the way local councils like Pendle are run. He told a meeting of Pendle Labour councillors in the Town Hall in Nelson last night that the new Labour Government wanted councils to get much closer to the people they represent.

With the possibility of early legislation in the Queen's Speech in November, the MP hoped everyone would start thinking about the options. "The Government's proposals, published in July, allow for councils to have a very different look and feel."

The Local Government Minister, Hilary Armstrong, who visited Pendle earlier this year, said: "Local government is about more than just how services are delivered. It is about the relationship between local people, place and politics. I believe in vibrant, dynamic local politics, inspiring not just the energy to vote but the enthusiasm to get involved."

The Minister added: "Councils should be developing their role as community leaders, by talking to, planning and working with local people and businesses; encouraging people to vote, including experimenting with supermarket and other easier-access voting; doing root and branch examinations of local services to identify how they can give a better deal for local taxpayers; cutting out unnecessary debate in the council chamber, giving councillors more time with the community they represent."

Note to Editors: The Government will be publishing next month practical guidance to councils on developing greater public participation. These could include citizens' juries, and community plans. **Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message**

For Immediate Release. No 252/98 Tuesday 22 September 1998

EC SURPLUS BEEF SCHEME FAILS TO DELIVER says MP

The government has decided that 1998 will be the last year in which Britain will take part in the EU Surplus Food Scheme. Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says the scheme has proved to be more trouble than it was worth.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "We really need to get to grips with the bureaucracy and paper chase which blights so many schemes which, on the face of it, are eminently worthwhile. The endless form filling with everything in triplicate are, in the end, self defeating."

The take up of the scheme has been particularly poor admits the MP. Many of the charitable organisations who have the responsibility for the distribution of the beef under the scheme have been very critical. The Salvation Army described the scheme as being "expensive and inefficient to run".

Note to Editors: Although the scheme is EU funded, the complex formula for payment means that in reality the UK government pays for 71% of the costs of EU expenditure within the United Kingdom. The government's decision not to participate in the scheme next year is a decision based on cost and efficiency considerations - the amount of beef getting to those most in need has not been satisfactory in relation to the amount of money being spent on the administration of the scheme. The government felt the money would be better spent on other extra measures that have been announced as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review - increased funding for health, free-eye tests for pensioners, and a minimum income guarantee for all pensioners. The scheme did not provide good value for money, nor did it achieve its primary objective of making serious in-roads into the tonnage of UK beef held in intervention.

For Immediate Release. No 253/98 Wed 23 September 1998

MP TO VISIT WEST CRAVEN HIGH SCHOOL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting West Craven High School this Friday (25 September) to meet Head teacher, Arnold Kuchartschuk, and to hear about the new developments taking place at the school.

The MP, who lives in Barnoldswick, says he is particularly keen on hearing more about the school's involvement in the new "National Grid for Learning Project".

The MP said: "West Craven is a marvellous school with lots to offer our young people."

For Immediate Release. No 254/98 Thursday 24 September 1998

WATERSIDE CAPTURED ON VIDEO

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining the audience at Colne Municipal Hall at 3.30pm tomorrow (Friday 25 September) for the first public screening of "..a better place to be..."
The Project Co-ordinator, Mairead Lovett says: "The video uses original music, songs, drama sketches and interviews to express our views and concerns about Waterside, the area we live in. "A better place to be" is of interest to anyone interested in community action and participation. The video also highlights local environmental issues as young people see it."
The video was devised by Waterside Youth Creative Arts Project and was supported by the Groundwork Trust East Lancs and the Waterside Community Project.

For Immediate Release. No 255/98 Thursday 24 September 1998

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP will be joining the Friends of Pendle Community Hospital at their Annual Fete at 11am on Saturday 26 September.

The MP will be at the fete in the grounds of the hospital in Leeds Road, Nelson. The Mayor of Pendle will also be present.
The fete will run until 3pm and there will be various stalls and side shows. Eileen Ashworth, the secretary of the Friends of Pendle Community Hospital, says: "All the money raised goes towards the extra luxuries and comforts for the patients in our hospital."

For Immediate Release. No 256/98 Tuesday 22 September 1998

MP BACKS ROAD SAFETY BLITZ

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice is backing plans by Lancashire County Council to launch a major blitz to improve road safety. The County and the Lancashire Police have formed a partnership to run the project in Lancashire as a pilot for the rest of the UK.
The MP told Richard Toon, the Chair of the Highways and Transportation Committee at a meeting in Preston earlier today that he was impressed by the experience of the state of Victoria in Australia. The MP said: "It shows what can be done to change driver behaviour. In Victoria, where they have been running a high profile enforcement and education programme, the results have been staggeringly successful. Total casualties have been cut by one third saving 2,000 lives and preventing 76,000 injuries freeing up 130,000 hospital beds."
The County has asked for special funding from the Government. The total set up costs are just under £7m.

The meeting - which included MPs Lindsay Hoyle and Joan Humble and the Director of Lancashire's Environment Directorate, Graham Harding - touched on a number of other issues important to Pendle and East Lancashire.
Gordon Prentice said: "I raised concerns about the County's plans for winter roads maintenance in Pendle and they are to get back to me on this."

For Immediate Release. No 257/98 Thursday 24 September 1998

MP MEETS NEW HEADTEACHER OF MANSFIELD

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today met Glynne Ward - the new acting headteacher of Mansfield School, Brierfield - in a move which signals close co-operation between the two as the school and wider community await the verdict of the special OFSTED inspection carried out last month on the orders of Education Secretary, David Blunkett.
The inspection report on the troubled school is expected to be published shortly.
After the meeting the MP said: "Everyone who knows Glynne Ward is impressed by her energy and commitment to education. She is just what the school needs to help put it back on an even keel after the past ten stormy months."
"I shall be visiting the school in November to meet the young people and the teachers and to see for myself how things are shaping up. We all want to look to the future."
Note to Editors: Ms Glynne Ward is currently acting head of Ribblesdale High School in Clitheroe. She took over from Mr Ian Blackey who has been acting head since December 1997 when the school's head, Ernie Pickup, was told to stay away following a financial investigation at the school.

For Immediate Release. No 258/98 Monday 28 September 1998

THE SAFETY CASE FOR CS SPRAY 'STILL TO BE MADE' says PENDLE MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing the Government's decision to put the incapacitant CS spray under the microscope to make sure it has no long term adverse health effects. The spray is routinely carried by the police here in Lancashire with the 3" phial carried on the constable's belt.
Home Office Minister Alun Michael has already welcomed the Department of Health's decision to refer CS spray to independent expert committees. The Minister said: "Police officers take daily risks in the course of protecting the community from serious crime. Latest figures show that more than 15,000 officers were assaulted in 1996/97 and the number of serious attacks increased for the third year running to 900. They deserve the best protection we can provide. That is why I believe CS spray should be available to the police service as a effective self-defence tool."
"CS spray has been scientifically tested to a level similar to that
which would be required for a new pharmaceutical drug, and there is no evidence that it poses any significant threat to human health."
The Pendle MP added: "I am sure it is no laughing matter being on the receiving end of a squirt of CS spray. And it is no fun for the police either. So we need to be 100% certain there are no damaging long term consequences of using this spray."

Note to Editors: Decisions about equipping police officers with CS spray are the responsibility of chief officers of police.

For Immediate Release. No 259/98 Monday 28 September 1998

ALLOTMENTS "OF GROWING IMPORTANCE" says MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says allotments are worth protecting and it is time we all woke up to the fact that they offer benefits for health, leisure, food production and the provision of green spaces in urban areas. The green fingered MP is a member of the All Party Gardening Committee at Westminster.

The MP's comments co-incided with the publication of the Government's response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee report on the Future for Allotments. The Minister, Alan Meale, said: "Allotments are valuable to local people for recreation and food production, and for the sustainable regeneration of our towns and cities."

"It is also important that local people are aware of the availability of allotments. Local authorities are now required to demonstrate the active promotion of allotments before they can dispose of statutory allotment land. This affords statutory allotment land greater protection than it previously had".

Allotments are also to be considered in the development of the Department of Health's Healthy Neighbourhoods policy and as part of the development of their White Paper "Our Healthier Nation".

Note to Editors: Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 requires local authorities to obtain the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions' consent for the sale or appropriation of statutory allotment land. The Government plans to retain this provision in view of concern about the loss of allotment land.

For Immediate Release. No 260/98 Monday 28 September 1998

LATEST TRANSPORT STATISTICS POINT TO TROUBLE AHEAD says PENDLE MP

The Government's latest compendium of transport statistics for Great Britain just published is described by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, as a unique snapshot of the way we now live. The MP, who has a long track record of interest in transport issues, says there's trouble ahead for all of us unless we promote the use of public transport. The MP said: "The number of vehicles on our roads is increasing all the time and we all know this is unsustainable. We need a common-sense approach which recognises that people value their cars and the increased mobility this brings with a recognition that things simply cannot continue as they are."

Note to Editors: The statistics show that in 1995/97, the average British resident travelled nearly 6,700 miles a year, an increase of a quarter since 1985/86. Over this period, the greatest increases have been recorded in travel by car (up 37%), and taxi/minicab (up 45%), with car and van usage accounting for 82% of the total mileage travelled. The greatest declines have been in motorcycle mileage (down 41%) and bus use outside London (down 22%), although bus use in London has increased by 5% over this period;

In 1996/97, the average UK household spent £41.20 a week on motoring costs, and £7.45 on fares and other travel costs, accounting for nearly 16% of all household expenditure. In real terms, the amount spent on travel and transport has increased by 21% over the last decade.

Petrol consumption for cars was about 32 mpg in 1995/97. Cars

under two years old averaged 35 mpg, compared with 30 mpg for those over four years old. In contrast, diesel driven cars averaged 42 mpg. Most forms of pollutant emissions from transport continue to fall and have been in steady decline since the late 1980s. However, total energy consumption by transport continues to rise to 34% of all UK energy use.

more follows:

TROUBLE ON THE ROAD says PENDLE MP

The number of vehicles taxed for use on Britain's roads had reached almost 27 million by the end of 1997, of which almost 23m were cars, nearly a 3% increase on 1996. The proportion of households without access to a car has declined from 38% in 1986 to 30% in 1996. Over this period, the proportion with one car has remained almost constant, at 45%, but 25% of households now have two or more cars compared to 18% ten years ago.

The number of people holding full driving licences has continued to increase, reaching 30.6m in 1995/97, (about two thirds of those aged 17 and over). 81 % of men hold licences. Licence holding among women has increased from 41% to 57% over the last decade.

Road is the dominant mode of transport for freight. In 1997 it accounted for four-fifths of goods lifted and two-thirds of goods moved. The overall increase in road freight between 1987 and 1997 was 38%. In 1997, motorways in Great Britain carried 17% of total traffic and 34 % of goods vehicle traffic, although they only accounted for only 1% of road length. Nearly half the traffic of articulated goods vehicles was on motorways. Cycle traffic fell by six % between 1996 and 1997, continuing a long period of declining use (almost 30% in the last decade 1987-97).

The overall condition of all urban roads in 1997 was the worst ever recorded by the National Road Maintenance Condition Survey. In clear conditions, over half of car drivers on motorways exceeded the speed limit - nearly one fifth by more than 10mph. On single carriageway A' roads, nearly one in ten exceeded the speed limit.

About a quarter of car drivers killed in road accidents were over the legal blood alcohol limit (80 milligrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood). During the ten years since 1987, fatal and seriously injured road casualties have fallen significantly, but slightly injured casualties have increased. Car occupants slight injuries, which constituted 57% of all casualties in 1997, have increased sharply since 1987, in line with traffic growth, although the increase may be overstated due to an increase in reporting rates.

Almost half of child accidental deaths are due to road accidents. For teenagers the proportion is nearly three quarters. Road deaths account for nearly 30% of all accidental deaths. The lifetime risk of being killed in a road traffic accident is about 1 in 200.

Local bus patronage declined by less than 1% to 4.36 billion passenger journeys in 1996/97, the most recent year for which complete survey data for Great Britain are available. The decline has been long term; bus patronage has fallen to half that of 1970, but the rate of decline has slowed in recent years.

For Immediate Release. No 261/98 Sunday 27 September 1998

MP DEFENDS DECISION TO IMPOSE AIRPORT DEPARTURE TAX

The decision by the Government to impose a new tax on people leaving the UK by air has been defended by local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP says he has had a lot of local people write to him recently complaining that the new tax is unfair.

Speaking before leaving for Blackpool for the Labour Party's Annual Conference, the MP said: "Very few people like paying taxes but the Government has got to raise money to do the things that need to be done. That's life, I'm afraid. People who choose to go on holiday abroad are not going to be deterred by the new tax anyway."

The MP added: "Air passenger duty was introduced to raise revenue from an area of the economy which had traditionally benefited from very low levels of taxation. There is no duty on the fuel used in most aircraft and, unlike most other European countries, no VAT on domestic flights in the UK. By comparison travel by road and,

to a lesser extent, rail is taxed through the fuel used. In addition cars, lorries, motorbikes and buses require a vehicle excise licence and people have got to pay."
"The current rates of air passenger duty, which came into effect on 1 November 1997, were approved by Parliament before the last general election. When Labour was in opposition we did not oppose the rates."

For Immediate Release. No 262/98 Sunday 27 September 1998

PENDLE MP HAILS NEW SUCCESS FOR ROLLS ROYCE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed the latest success by local firm Rolls Royce in winning the contract to put the famed Trent jet engines on the wings of the British Airways' new fleet of Boeing 777s. The heart of the engine - the fan blades - are manufactured in Barnoldswick where the MP lives.
Speaking after the RR announcement, the Pendle MP said: "We all know the new Government has been a good friend to the aerospace industry and this relationship is now paying dividends. Launch aid has gone to the Airbus A340-500 and to Rolls Royce for the development of the Trent engine. It really is splendid news for Barlick and for the whole industry."
RR won the £580m contract against stiff opposition from General Electric and Pratt & Whitney. Rolls-Royce will provide 32 Trent 895 engines for the 777s ordered in August by British Airways with another 32 engines in prospect for 16 aircraft on which BA has options.
Local MP, Gordon Prentice, saw the giant new 777 at Farnborough International air show earlier this month. The MP makes a point of going to the air show - held every second year - to give support to the Consortium of Lancashire Aerospace who display their wares at the showcase event.
Note to Editors: In July, Pendle MP welcomed the high profile exhibition put on by the CLA at Westminster. The North West is the largest single centre of the UK aerospace industry, representing a quarter of the total UK aerospace output, The region's unique know how and skills base is unsurpassed in the UK. The area produces £4 billion in aerospace turnover per annum and the industry supports over 60,000 jobs in the region.

For Immediate Release. No 263/98 Wednesday 30 September 1998

MP MAKES CONNECTION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, could find his life running more smoothly now he knows that there will be a train service between Skipton and London. The service is to be provided by Great North Eastern Railway and will recreate the link which last ran 22 years ago. The first train will leave Skipton at 6.54 am and the journey will take 3 hours with the diesel train travelling at speeds of up to 125 miles per hour.
Gordon Prentice said: "This new service is marvellous news for West Craveners. I congratulate GNER for laying on this splendid service."
The Pendle MP lives in Barnoldswick just 8 miles from Skipton and therefore anticipates using the service regularly when returning to Westminster.

For Immediate Release. No 264/98 Monday 5 October 1998

PENDLE MP BACKS BLITZ TO BEAT THE BURGLAR

More than two million homes across the country are to benefit from a major crackdown on domestic burglary says local MP, Gordon Prentice.
The Pendle MP was speaking following an announcement by Home Secretary, Jack Straw, that £50m will be targeted at up to 500 areas of England and Wales with high burglary rates.
Burglary currently represents 20% of all recorded crime with around half representing domestic burglary. Over half a million burglaries from a dwelling were recorded by the police in 1997.
The Pendle MP said: "My constituency office has been broken into in the past so I know exactly how people feel who have been burgled. It is an appalling, stomach turning intrusion." The MP added: "All my confidential records are held in a state of the art triple lock system that even Houdini couldn't crack."
Funding will be awarded to innovative anti-burglary schemes which complement local crime reduction strategies. Projects may include improvements to street lighting, developing rapid repair services, security advice for repeat victims or by installing CCTV.
Notes for Editors: Home Office research shows anti-burglary schemes can reduce the expected levels of burglaries in targeted areas by up to 30%.
The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local authorities and the police to form crime reduction partnerships, undertake detailed audits of specific crime problems affecting their communities and then develop individual strategies to tackle the identified crime problems. Guidance on which areas will be eligible for the funding will be published shortly. The first projects are likely to start in April 1999.

For Immediate Release. No 265/98 Monday 5 October 1998

NEW RIGHTS FOR WORKERS

The introduction from today of new statutory rights for paid leave, rest breaks and protection from working long hours were welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice.
The Working Time Directive came into effect last week and sets out minimum levels of paid annual leave, rest breaks and total weekly hours of employment which workers are now entitled to.
Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, Gordon Prentice said: "If people want to work longer hours then that is entirely a matter for them. But no-one should be compelled to work longer than 48 hours a week without their express agreement."
Industry Minister Ian McCartney said: "With the CBI estimating up to £25 billion lost in 1996 due to absenteeism these measures make good business sense. The best companies provide paid leave, regular rest breaks and a sensible working week because they recognise that people need time away from the workplace."
"The regulations set out minimum levels of entitlements. From today workers have the right to regular rest breaks, three weeks annual leave and the right not to work more than 48 hours a week without their agreement."

Note to Editors: The Regulations provide the following new rights: three weeks paid annual leave, rising to four weeks in 1999; 11 hours rest a day; a day's rest a week; in-work rest breaks; a limit of an

average of 48 hours a week which a worker can be required to work; a limit of an average of eight hours work in 24 hours for night workers.

For Immediate Release. No 266/98 Monday 5 October 1998

MP HIGHLIGHTS "WORRY" OVER UNCLAIMED BENEFITS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says Pendle people should claim the benefits to which they are entitled. He says it is a tragedy that so many people - often in dire financial straits - refuse to claim what is their entitlement.
The MP comments co-incide with the publication of the latest estimates (96/97) from the Department of Social Security on the take-up of the main income related benefits: Housing Benefit, Income Support, Family Credit and Council Tax Benefit.
The MP said: "Every day we hear about scroungers and fiddlers and people conning the system but there are millions of people - especially pensioners - who do not claim what is theirs. They feel stigmatised. Too often, people have paid their taxes throughout their working lives only to spend their retirement in poverty. They deserve better than that. We certainly need to crack down on the fraudsters but at the same time we must get help to those entitled to it."

Note to Editors: Total amount of Housing Benefit left unclaimed by entitled people was between £320 million and £700 million. Total amount of Income Support left unclaimed was between £1,240m and £1,800m. The average number of people entitled to Income Support and yet not claiming it was in the range 1.07m and 1.55m. Total amount of Council Tax Benefit left unclaimed by entitled non-recipients was in the range £460m to £670m. The average number of people entitled yet not claiming, was between 1.34m and 1.99m. There were 5.53 million recipients accounting for £2,100m of Council Tax Benefit. Total amount of Family Credit left unclaimed was £330 million. The average number of entitled non- recipients was 230,000. An
average 610,000 people received £1,730m worth of Family Credit. Taking all four benefits together, there was between £2,350m and £3,500m left unclaimed in 1996/97; this compares to £25,560m that was claimed.

For Immediate Release. No 267/98 Wednesday 7 October 1998

MP DUMPS JUNK FAXES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is a satisfied man. Following his outcry over unsolicited faxes that kept pouring out of his office fax machine he can now announce that they will no longer be using up his paper. By the end of this year legislation will be in place to prevent this form of cold selling as part of a large number of Regulations in the Telecoms Data Protection Directive.
Gordon Prentice said, "I will be pleased to see the end of these faxes.
They were a real pain in the neck. They have attention grabbing headlines but advertise complete dross. It is only right and proper that subscribers should be able to choose whether or not they receive these faxes."
The MP continued, "I am also pleased to see that this unsolicited advertising MUST include a name and address or freephone number, too many are currently being sent anonymously."
Note to the Editor: Under Article 12.1 of the EC Telecoms Data Protection Directive direct marketing faxes may only be sent to individual subscribers (including sole traders and partnerships) if the

subscriber has given prior consent. Regulation 24 requires callers to include a name and address OR freephone number as part of all direct marketing faxes and calls.

For Immediate Release. No 268/98 Tuesday 6 October 1998

MP 'RELIEVED' BY EU DECISION TO HELP COTTON FINISHING INDUSTRY

A decision by the European Union not to impose big taxes on imports of grey (undyed) cotton has been hailed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP's Pendle constituency is home to a number of important firms such as Albert Hartley in Barnoldswick who rely on access to sensibly priced cotton fabric from countries such as Pakistan and Egypt.
About 250,000 tonnes of cotton are imported into the EU every year mostly to be turned into printed and dyed fabrics for home furnishings.
The European Commission caused uproar last year when it slapped import duties on the cotton - jeopardising thousands of jobs in the North West of England. Now the 9 - 6 vote by EU Member States safeguards thousands of jobs in the cotton finishing industry.
The Pendle MP said: "This decision is long overdue but it is very welcome indeed. Many jobs here in North East Lancashire which were previously in the balance will now, I hope, be safe."

For Immediate Release. 268/98 Tuesday 6 October 1998

PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE MP MEETS THE SAMARITANS TODAY AT 7.30PM IN NELSON TOWN HALL.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining the Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale branch of the Samaritans at their AGM at the Town Hall in Nelson. Dr Launer, the Consultant Psychiatrist at Burnley General Hospital is guest speaker.
The MP said: "I applaud the work that the Samaritans do, they have volunteers on call 24 hours 7 days a week whose object is to help people whatever the problem."

For Immediate Release. No 269/98 Wednesday 7 October 1998

PHOTOCALL - MP FLAG SELLING IN BARNOLDSWICK TOWN CENTRE AT 10.00AM SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER 1998.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be selling flags in Barnoldswick Town Centre, alongside local campaigner Sally Lambert, to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Care charity. The charity is the only one of its kind in the country which specifically offers support to patients and their families. This year the charity is celebrating its 25th Anniversary.
The MP said, "Sally has done tremendous work for this charity and raised a great deal of money over recent years. I shall be lending a hand and I am certain that the people

of Barnoldswick will be as generous as ever in supporting this crucially important charity."

Note to editor: This disease is a significant public health problem causing the death of 120 women each year in East Lancashire. There were an average of 319 new cases of female breast cancer per year, notified in East Lancashire in 1993 and 1994.

For Immediate Release. No 270/98 Wednesday 7 October 1998

PHOTOCALL: COLNE GUIDES COFFEE MORNING 11.00AM SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER 1998 AT COLNE PARISH CHURCH ROOMS, CHURCH STREET, COLNE.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be guided to a cup of coffee at Colne Parish Church rooms this Saturday when he joins members of 1st Colne Guide Unit and St Philips Guides of Nelson.
The local MP said: "Young people can get a lot out of being part of a local organisation such as the guides. I know our local troop participates in a range of activities and next year they intend to visit London for the weekend."

For Immediate Release. No 271/98 Wednesday 7 October 1998

PHOTOCALL - MP TO ATTEND SILVERMAN LECTURE AT THE CLARION HOUSE, GINNY LANE 4.30PM SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER 1998

This year's Silverman Lecture is to take place at the Clarion House - home of the Independent Labour Party. The guest speaker is John Hamilton, former deputy leader of Liverpool Council, who clashed with the notorious Derek Hatton during the 1980s. Mr Hamilton's theme is 'Spin-doctoring and the media.'
Among the guests will be the former MP's son, Paul Silverman, who is currently visiting Pendle.
Gordon Prentice said: "The last Silverman Lecture was delivered by Margaret Simey former Chair of the Merseyside Police Authority so we are having our fair share of orators from that neck of the woods. I am looking forward to hearing what John has to say on this ever topical issue!"

For Immediate Release. No 272/98 Wednesday 7 October 1998

PLANE SPEAKING MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be 'flying' over to County Hall, Preston at 7.30pm Friday 9 October 1998 as guest of the Chair of Lancashire County Council - County Councillor Mrs Irene Short at a dinner for the Lancashire Aerospace Industry.

Mr Prentice said: "The future of the aerospace industry is key to the prosperity my Pendle constituency and these occasions can prove a great way to swap views with anyone and everyone connected with the industry."

Note to editors: The MP visited Farnborough International air show on 9 September to give support to the Consortium of Lancashire Aerospace. The North West is the largest single centre of the UK aerospace industry, representing a quarter of the total UK aerospace output, The region's unique know how and skills base is unsurpassed in the UK. The area produces £4 billion in aerospace turnover per annum and the industry supports over 60,000 jobs in the region.
The Consortium's membership covers all areas of aerospace activity, from the prime contractors, such as British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce, right through the supply chain to small subcontractors. All types of aerospace products and services are supplied by the Consortium's membership.

For Immediate Release. No 273/98 Thursday 8 October 1998

MP LOOKING INTO LOGOS

Gordon Prentice MP has joined forces with local campaigner Roy Colton in a bid to improve disability provision in hotels. Mr Colton and his wife are both in wheelchairs so when they require hotel accommodation they quite naturally look for one which advertises the Wheelchair logo. However it appears that even this does not guarantee suitable accommodation.
The MP said: "It is very frustrating to go to the trouble of selecting what should be a suitable hotel only to find that the provisions made for wheelchair users are not at all suitable. Of the hotels Mr Colton has contacted, which all advertised the Wheelchair logo, one was totally unsuitable for access, one had a portable ramp which Mr Colton says is potentially dangerous and another could only cater for one wheelchair per room."
Nationally the country's largest disabled charity Scope has condemned the lack of wheelchair-friendly hotel rooms for delegates to its annual conference as "appalling". Scope said hundreds of people wanted to attend the conference, this year being held in London for the first time, from 5-7 November. So far 50 wheelchair-users have booked but there were just 20 hotel rooms in the area close to the venue, the London Arena, which were suitable for people with wheelchairs, the charity said.

more follows

MP LOOKING INTO LOGOS cont.

Gordon Prentice MP said: "There are 6.5 million disabled people in the UK and they are just as likely to need overnight accommodation as non-disabled people. It is time for hoteliers to make sure they meet the need of disabled customers. Clearly if a hotel displays the Wheelchair logo this should guarantee a minimum standard of facilities. I am in touch with fellow East Lancs MP Janet Anderson who is Minister for Tourism to ask her to look into the regulations regarding this matter."
Note to editor: The Government timetable for implementing the sections of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which refer to the supply of goods and services have recently been announced. The new legislation will make it illegal for businesses to offer an inferior standard of service to disabled people.

For Immediate Release. No 274/98 Monday 12 October 1998

GP CALLS FOR MORE GPs

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is joining forces with the East Lancashire Health Authority in a bid to attract young (and not so young) doctors into the area.
The MP, who met the Health Authority chairman, Bill Ashworth, earlier today, says the number of local GPs approaching retirement age means a big recruitment drive is needed to keep up the numbers.
The MP said: "I have been taking the pulse of Pendle's medical establishment and we need to get some young blood into the area. Overall in East Lancashire we need to recruit about 79 GPs over the next five years. Blackburn and Darwen needs to recruit 26 doctors out of its current 78 but here in Pendle we need to replace about one third of our local doctors - 17 out of 47!"
The MP added: "Our local doctors do a splendid job and when they decide to hang up their stethoscopes - as they must all do eventually - we have to make sure we get the best and the brightest replacements. We need to forge close links with the medical schools and sell this area as a great place to live and work."
Note to Editor: The NHS in East Lancashire (as elsewhere in the UK) is being reorganised to give a bigger say to General Practitioners. Six borough based Primary Care Groups are being set up, including one here in Pendle.

For Immediate Release. No 275/98 Tuesday 13 October 1998

MP TUNES IN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing the bid by Two Boroughs Radio (2BR) to broadcast in Pendle and Burnley. Before they can go on air they need a full licence from the Radio Authority.
The MP is a fan of Radio Lancashire and has often crossed swords with their ace interviewer, Andy Peebles! But he sees a place in the radio spectrum for a more local station.
The MP said: "The Burnley and Pendle area has a unique character and deserves to have its own spot on the dial so local people can have access to the airwaves. The pilot broadcasts were good and I would like to see 2BR here to stay."
Note to editor: The Radio Authority - the body that regulates commercial radio in the UK - will shortly be advertising a licence to run a local radio station for the Burnley and Pendle area.

For Immediate Release. No 276/98 Tuesday 13 October 1998

MP BACKS CAP ON PARTY FUNDING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing far reaching proposals to cap the amount of money political parties can spend in the run up to elections. The Neill Committee is likely to say that political parties should be subject to a £20 million spending limit on their general election campaigns.
Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today the MP said: "It is simply unacceptable for political parties to spend millions on election campaigns and

not disclose where the cash comes from. And the amount of money spent in modern election campaigns is simply silly."
The MP added: "At the moment there is a cap on what can be spent by candidates in his or her constituency - but, crucially, there is no cap on national spending. That's got to change."
In January last year the General Election campaign arrived in Pendle with the appearance of a giant Conservative poster opposite the Town Hall in Nelson. At the time, the MP said: "The Conservatives have more money than sense. But the serious question is who is paying for this £10m poster campaign?"

Note to Editors: The Labour Party has proposed four key reforms:
• Every political party must declare the source of all donations over £5,000.
• No company shall make a political donation without first balloting shareholders to set up a political fund.
• Any shareholder must have the right to opt out of their share of a political fund.
• No political party shall accept donations from foreign sources.

For Immediate Release. No 277/98 Tuesday 13 October 1998

THANKS A LOTTERY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is up in arms at allegations that the proportion of lottery money going to charity, heritage, sport and the arts is to be cut over the next few years to pay for so-called "government schemes" in education, health and the environment.
The MP said: "There is no truth in the suggestion that lottery cash is going to be creamed off to go into mainstream Government programmes. At present arts, sport, heritage and charities each get just over 16% of Lottery proceeds allocated to good causes. The Government has guaranteed that they will continue to receive the same proportion of funds after the new lottery licence is awarded in 2001."
The MP added: "The existing good causes still get the money they were expecting - and more."
Note to Editors: On previous income forecasts, they would each have received £1.8 billion by the end of the licence period, but our latest forecasts mean they can now bank on an extra £50 million each on top of this - an extra £200 million in total. At the same time the Government has been able to promise more money for new initiatives in health, education and the environment - ensuring even more people share in the benefits the Lottery can bring. These funds will be administered by the new independent lottery distribution body: the New Opportunities Fund.
The use of lottery money for health, educational, and environmental initiatives which are additional to current Government funded projects was not only pledged in the Party's manifesto at the general election, it was also thoroughly debated in Parliament during the progress of the 1998 National Lottery Act, and has overwhelming public support.

For Immediate Release. No 278/98 Tuesday 13 October 1998

MP MEETS LOCAL HEALTH VISITORS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be taking the temperature of local Health Visitors tonight when he meets them at the Brierfield Community Centre. Recent press reports

have hinted that the Government plans controversial major reforms which could spell the end of health visitors as we know them.
Speaking in advance of the meeting the MP said: "There has been a lot of speculation that the health visitor is going to be airbrushed out of the NHS. It is rumoured that 25,000 health visitors are to lose their professional and legal status and become registered nurses."
In July 1997 Health Minister, Alan Milburn, announced that the government had commissioned an independent review of the statutory bodies created by the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979. The report is expected to be published by the Department of Health within the next two weeks.
The MP continued: "Our health visitors do a fantastic job and I want to hear from them about how they see their role developing within the NHS and I shall be telling Ministers what the people at the sharp end really think."

Note to editor: On 27 September the Observer claimed that the review report proposed that the separate profession of 'health visitors' should be abolished along with categories of nurse generally agreed to be obsolete such as 'fever nurses'. This would leave just six legal categories of nurse (adult, mental health, learning disability, child, the former state enrolled nurses and midwives) in place of the current fifteen categories. The report said that midwives would keep their independent registration but health visitors would not.

For Immediate Release. No 279/98 Wednesday 14 October 1998

MP CALLS FOR ROOT AND BRANCH REFORM OF HOUSING BENEFIT SYSTEM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is arguing for a root and branch reform of the Housing Benefit system. He says vast amounts of public money is being tipped into the pockets of private landlords. There is a number of rogue landlords who keep their tenants in utter squalor and are indifferent to the concerns of owner occupiers living nearby their deteriorating properties.
The MP said: "As we all know, in some areas of Pendle houses can be acquired for as little as £10,000 - £14,000 and in some cases you can pick up a house for as low as £3,000. Private landlords can buy up large numbers of very cheap properties and collect rent in the form of housing benefit probably at a minimum rent of around £65 per week. This would give a private landlord a return of a staggering 33% per year on a £10,000 property."
The government is currently conducting a review of the Housing Benefit system and the MP has written to the Housing Minister Hilary Armstrong urging early action.
Note to editor: The Housing Benefit system as it stands has resulted in a major expansion of the private rented sector in Pendle during the 1990s. Pendle's Housing Benefit bill has risen from £1 million in 1990 to over £9 million in the current year.

For Immediate Release. No 280/98 Wednesday 14 October 1998

MP GOES RURAL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be spending Thursday and Friday of this week in the Lake District for a series of in depth discussions with key people from the National Trust including Oliver Maurice, Chairman of the North West Region and David Porter, Area Manager Lancashire and South Cumbria.
The MP said: "I am a keen National Trust member and it is a splendid organisation. I am looking forward to visiting Grasmere, Borrowdale and the surrounding area and swapping ideas about how best we can support rural shops and post offices and the other services that the people need.
The MP will have a face to face meeting with farmers to discuss the difficulties of the agricultural sector.
The MP continued: "The National Trust owns and manages some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain but it is not preserved in aspic. We need a living countryside which provides work for the people who live there. We do not want them to become deserted and lifeless areas."

For Immediate Release. No 280/98 September 1998

'DON'T WAIT TO EMBRACE FUNDING SHAKE-UP' PARTY LEADERS TOLD

Political parties are to be subject to a £20 million spending limit on their general election campaigns under tough new proposals on funding to be unveiled today.

Party leaders are under pressure to implement immediately the radical reforms in today's report by Lord Neill's Committee on Standards in Public Life.

The report, to be published at Westminster this afternoon, is expected to recommend a major shake-up of the way political parties are financed, with around a hundred changes.

Lord Neill's report is expected to include:

:: a £20 million ceiling on spending by national parties in general elections, and caps on spending on elections to the European Parliament, assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, or for Mayor of London.

:: a call for the disclosure of donations and sponsorship worth more than £5,000 from companies, or more than £1,000 from individuals.

:: an end to donations from overseas unless the donors are entitled to vote in UK elections and an end to blind trusts like those used by Labour's then shadow cabinet before the general election.

:: Parties will also be asked to disclose all their sponsorship and fund-raising activities at their annual conferences.

So extensive are the proposed reforms that there may be a delay of more than a year before they can be slotted into the Parliamentary timetable to become law.

A Labour Party source said: "The legislation that will be required looks likely to be fairly complicated so immediate action may not be possible."

But, even if the Government acted immediately, the new laws would be too late to affect the elections to the Scottish and Welsh assemblies. So Labour plans to step up its demands to the other parties to abide by Lord Neill's recommendations even before they become the law.

And today Andrew Puddephatt, director of civil rights group Charter 88, added to the pressure for immediate action, saying there was no reason why party leaders should not put the main proposals into effect now.

Tony Blair charged Lord Neill's committee to investigate the whole area of party financing after Labour promised in its election manifesto to clean up politics in the wake of years of Tory "sleaze". Labour has pledged new laws on party financing in this Parliament.

The Opposition is expected to benefit from a proposal for a massive increase in state funding for civil service support. This could be worth £1 million a year to the Conservative party and £500,000 to the Liberal Democrats.

Donors who give between £50 and £500 a year to political parties would be able to claim back tax relief, under the Neill proposals.

There would be wider scrutiny of honours made to people who have given more than £5,000 in the previous five years to a political party.

Companies wanting to make donations to political parties would have to gain shareholders' consent first.

The report is also believed to warn the Government not to use public money during a referendum to finance a one-sided campaign.

Instead, Lord Neill proposes a set of strict rules over how any future plebiscite -- whether it be on the question of Britain joining Europe's single currency or on abandoning the first-past-the-post voting system in favour of proportional representation -- should be run.

Another proposal is for a new Electoral Commissioner, backed up by staff, to act as a watchdog, able to hold special investigations into funding matters. Fines and even prison sentences could be imposed on those found guilty.

Today Mr Puddephatt said: "We're calling on the party leaders to immediately implement those of the recommendations they can.

"This includes full disclosure of all donations over £5,000 from companies and over £1,000 for individuals."

"The party leaders should also agree a voluntary limit on spending in elections with the local elections and European elections coming up next year."

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott vowed at the weekend that the Government would introduce tough new laws on the funding of political parties if Lord Neill's proposals did not go far enough.

Tory Party chairman Michael Ancram said that party leader William Hague had already banned foreign donations and ensured greater transparency about funds.

"We believe the public want to see a new era of openness in party funding and we hope the Neill committee will put forward a coherent package of proposals building on the reforms we have already introduced to change the culture of party financi

For Immediate Release. No 281/98 September 1998

FACTSHEET ON GOVERNMENT "RAID" ON THE LOTTERY

[From Chris Smith's office, 12 October 1998]

It is alleged that the proportion of lottery money going to charity, heritage, sport and the arts is to be reduced over the next few years to pay for so-called "government schemes" in education, health and the environment. These are the facts.

At present arts, sport, heritage and charities each receive 16 and two thirds per cent of Lottery proceeds allocated to good causes. The Government has guaranteed that they will continue to receive the same proportion of funds after the new lottery licence is awarded in 2001.

On previous income forecasts, they would each have received £1.8 billion by the end of the licence period, but our latest forecasts mean they can now bank on an extra £50 million each on top of this - an extra £200 million in total. This was announced at the Party Conference in September 1998.
At the same time we have been able to promise more money for new initiatives in health, education and the environment - ensuring even more people share in the benefits the Lottery can bring. These funds will be administered by the new independent lottery distribution body: the New Opportunities Fund.
The use of lottery money for health, educational, and environmental initiatives which are additional to current Government funded projects was not only pledged in the Party's manifesto at the general election, it was also thoroughly debated in Parliament during the progress of the 1998 National Lottery Act, and has overwhelming public support. We are keeping that promise in a way which ensures that existing good causes still get the money they were expecting - and more.

For Immediate Release. No 282/98 September 1998

Friday 9th October 1998

SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE TO PAY REVIEW BODIES

Department offers evidence on Doctors and Dentists; and on Nurses, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine
The Department of Health has today submitted written evidence to the Review Body for Doctors and Dentists, and the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine.
Health Minister Alan Milburn said today: "The Government wants to see a fair pay rise for all nurses which is affordable to the National Health Service. In particular, we say that we want to make progress on improving the starting rate of pay for nurses. If we are going to do that, and if in particular we are going to be able to end the staging of pay awards, then the Review Bodies need to come up with recommendations that allow the NHS to live within its means."
Summaries of the evidence to both Review Bodies are attached.

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EVIDENCE TO THE NPRB

1. The Government wants to see a fair pay rise for nurses, midwives and Professions Allied to Medicine (PAMs) which is affordable and which will support modernisation of the health service.
2. A fair and affordable pay settlement will complement the measures we have introduced to aid nurse recruitment, putting right years of under-investment by our predecessors. For that reason - and unlike previous years - we ask the Review Body to look at focusing on improvements in the starting rate of pay for qualified nurses within an affordable overall pay uplift recommendation for all nurses. We also ask the Review Body to look at London weighting and, if affordable, improvements in career progression for staff nurses. The Government believes these are the key priorities. We look to work with staff organisations and the Review Body in addressing them.
3. This focus will complement the initiatives the Government has launched to get up to an extra 15,000 nurses working in the NHS:
   * giving nursing students financially favourable NHS bursaries rather than loans

* expanding the number of nurse training places cut by the last Goveernment
* providing new incentives to attract back nurses who had left the health service and to allow non-nursing NHS staff to train to become nurses
* introducing more flexible and family friendly employment policies
* tackling violence and harassment and improving occupational health services
* ending the routine use of short-term contracts of employment

4. Pay is an important factor, but so is the quality of the working lives of staff. Our ability to make progress at the rate we would like on improving recruitment and working conditions is dependent on affordable pay awards. Similarly, our ability to make the pay system fairer and to end staging rely on pay settlements being consistent with the financial position of the health service. Any future reforms to the pay system to make it modern and fair depend on an affordable settlement this year, allowing scope for further possible change within the three-year NHS spending plan.
5. Fair pay helps to support the Government's NHS modernisation programme by helping to recruit, retain and motivate staff who deliver patient care.
6. But the level of awards has to support - not detract from - the Government's firm modernisation plans (outlined in the CSR White Paper, Modern Public Services for Britain and the National Priorities Guidance: Modernising health and social care) for investment in areas such as mental health, cancer and heart disease services, hospital building and equipment, and information technology.
7. Pay settlements in the public sector also need to support the achievement of our inflation target. The inflation target will be met but it will be achieved without unnecessary loss of jobs and output only if pay is set at responsible levels throughout the economy.
8. Unlike many other professions nurses, midwives and PAMs are not vulnerable to slower growth in the wider economy. Overall, nursing remains a secure form of employment offering good and improving prospects for career progression as the role of nurses, midwives and PAMs is enhanced in line with the Government's objectives. Reserved places for nurses on Primary Care Groups, prescribing by nurses, greater control over childbirth services by midwives, a key role for PAMs in developing improved rehabilitation services, and the prospect of nurse consultants all offer a more satisfying nursing career at the heart of the new NHS.
9. Nurses earnings are 16% higher than their basic pay. As a result, qualified nurses will earn on average #17,800 a year by December 1998. Over the last few years nurses' earning have grown at a faster rate than the average for the economy. Overall, nurses and PAMs receive an average of 1% each year on their earnings before they get a pay rise. In addition, 90,000 senior nursing and PAMs staff are now eligible for new discretionary points which can increase a salary by around #1,000 a year. Over one third of nurses and PAMs receive 4% extra a year before they get a pay increase.
10. Nonetheless, the Government recognises that a fair affordable pay rise, including an increase in starting pay, would have a positive impact on the image of nursing, on morale and on

recruitment.

11. Pay has to be affordable and does have to support our modernisation agenda. We know how unwelcome the staging of pay awards has been. The challenge that faces the Review Body is to produce recommendations that are fair for staff and affordable for the NHS so that staging can be avoided.

SUMMARY of DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EVIDENCE TO THE DDRB

1. The Government wants to see a fair pay rise for doctors and dentists, which is affordable and which will support modernisation of the health service.
2. This must be seen against a consistently healthy position on recruitment and retention which shows a continuing commitment from doctors and dentists in the NHS. Medicine and dentistry are extremely attractive, well-paid and very secure careers. There are no significant recruitment problems for hospital and public health doctors, or for dentists or GPs.
3. The Government is continuing to invest in the medical workforce with rising numbers of undergraduate and postgraduate trainees. The number of GP registrars is now rising and there are a record number of doctors and dentists working for the health service. There are more medical students and doctors in training than ever before. To further improve service quality and to meet rising demand, we plan to take on up to 7,000 more doctors over the next three years, providing pay settlements are affordable.
4. An affordable pay rise for doctors and dentists will complement the initiatives the Government is taking to improve the quality of their working lives and to give them greater influence in shaping the future of local health services. We have taken several steps, such as the establishment of a new GP retainer scheme, the salaried doctor scheme, and local development schemes to bring enhanced earning and more flexible employment opportunities for GPs. We have set NHS trusts, as a priority, the task of tackling the working conditions of junior doctors, such as food and accommodation. We have targetted additional payments to dentists in deprived areas and those parts of the country where access to NHS dental care has been problematic. This is all complemented by our drive to increase the opportunities for the involvement of doctors in shaping local services: through GP involvement on Primary Care Groups, and through hospital doctor involvement in Health Improvement Programmes.
5. We want to see the quality of working lives continue to improve but our ability to make progress at the rate we would like is dependent on affordable pay awards. Similarly, our ability to end staging depends on pay settlements being consistent with the financial position of the health service.
6. Fair pay helps to support the Government's NHS modernisation programme by helping to recruit, retain and motivate staff who deliver patient care.
7. But the level of awards has to support - not detract from - the Government's firm modernisation plans (outlined in the CSR White Paper, Modern Public Services for Britain and the National Priorities Guidance: Modernising health and social care) for investment in areas such as mental health, cancer and heart disease services, GP premises, hospital building and equipment, and information technology.
8. Pay settlements in the public sector also need to support the achievement of our inflation target. The inflation target will be met but it will be achieved without unnecessary loss of jobs and output only if pay is set at responsible levels throughout

the economy.

9. We believe that doctors and dentists are already well-rewarded in a very secure job where they are not vulnerable, unlike many other professions, to slower growth in the wider economy.
10. The average hospital consultant earns £60,000 plus, the average full-time family doctor £55,000, and the average dentist (working not less than 2 days a week for the NHS) £50,000. Doctors and dentists' pay increases, at 50%, over the last eight years have run ahead of increases of 37% in the private sector and 38% in the public sector. In addition, many doctors benefit from incremental progress. On average, a doctor receives an extra 1 per cent on his/her salary each year even before the annual pay increase takes effect.
11. The Government's intention is also acting to modernise pay structures for doctors and dentists. We will be opening negotiations with the profession on modernising the consultant contract to ensure it helps deliver our service objectives. We have also set in train interim changes to the distinction awards system to make it fairer, pending a more fundamental review next year. We are committed to further targetted payments to dentists as a result of changes in the patient registration period. Finally, we are close to reaching agreement with GPs' leaders on the distribution of the #60 million recommended as targetted payments by the Review Body last year - worth an additional 4% next year on average GPs' earning even before the Review Body makes recommendations for 1999/2000.
12. Pay has to be affordable and does have to support our modernisation agenda. We know how unwelcome the staging of pay awards has been. The challenge that faces the Review Body is to produce recommendations that are fair for staff and affordable for the NHS so that staging can be avoided.

For Immediate Release. No 283/98 Monday 26 October 1998

LOCAL MP AT BREAST CANCER SURVEY LAUNCH

The results of a new and detailed survey of Breast Cancer are due to be unveiled tomorrow (27 October 1998) at the House of Commons by the All-Party Group on Breast Cancer. The MP, who is a member of the group, recently joined local campaigner Sally Lambert in Barnoldswick Town Square selling flags to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Care charity.

The MP said: "There was a fantastic response in Barlick and we raised lots of money for this very worthwhile cause. This disease is a significant public health problem causing the death of 120 women each year in East Lancashire."

The MP continued: "Breast cancer kills 14,000 women in the UK every year. Various initiatives, such as the breast screening programme, have led to big cut in the number of deaths over recent years. But we want this to continue and these new initiatives are very important."

Note to editor: The new initiative was a document launched in 1996 entitled 'Guidance for Purchasers: Improving Outcomes in Breast Cancer.' The Guidance produced by the NHS Executive was designed to help Purchasers commission, plan and develop the best breast cancer services for their health district. The Guidance would offer a more consistent approach to the delivery of breast cancer services across the country. Two years on, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Breast Cancer felt that there was a lack of information on the success of the Guidance and therefore commissioned a study to look into the usage of the Guidance by Health Authorities. The result of this study will be announced 9.00 am on Tuesday 27 October 1998.

For Immediate Release. No 284/98 Monday 26 October 1998

MP PLEDGES SUPPORT TO RALLY ON KASHMIR

A rally at Westminster tomorrow (Tuesday 27 October), organised by the All Party Kashmir Co-ordination Committee UK, will hear Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, restate his commitment to campaign for a plebiscite to allow the Kashmiris to decide the future of their troubled land. He has tabled a Commons motion which will appear on the Order Paper tomorrow.

Speaking in advance of the rally, the MP said: "The nuclear explosions by India and Pakistan earlier this year make our search for a just solution even more urgent. My own council in Pendle has played its part by setting up a Kashmir Working Group, ably led by Cllr Khalid Mehmood. I have set up a meeting next month between members of the group and Foreign Office Minister, Derek Fatchett. I hope we shall see progress made."

Note to Editors: The EDM reads: That this House records that 27 October 1998 marks the 51st anniversary of the Indian occupation of large areas of the state of Jammu and Kashmir; notes that a peaceful solution to one of the world's longest running disputes appears no closer; welcomes the recent initiatives and statements made by both the Indian and Pakistan Governments and the US President in respect of the development of a constructive dialogue; views with the gravest concern recent events which have seen nuclear tests conducted by the governments of both India and Pakistan and the general increase in military tension across the Line of Control; believes that the world community can ignore at its peril the potential for nuclear confrontation in one of the most highly militarised areas of the world; expresses regret that the reports of human rights violations, particularly cases of extra judicial torture and death continue unabated; further believes that, as in the Middle East and Northern Ireland, a just and meaningful solution to this problem cannot take place without the full involvement of all parties involved, particularly the Kashmiri people themselves; calls on the Government not only to support vigorously the UN resolutions of 1948,1949 and 1957 which upheld at the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination through a UN supervised plebiscite but also to take lead in raising these matters again in the UN.

For Immediate Release. No 285/98 Tuesday 20 October 1998

POLLUTION HOTSPOTS FACE CLEAN-UP

The Government should tighten up emission regulations as a way of tackling pollution hotspots says local MP Gordon Prentice. He suspects businesses will not move over to alternative fuels without a push.

The MP raised the issue in June when news broke that Lucas was planning to stop production of the compressed natural gas cylinders made at the company's Burnley plant. The Lucas decision - dubbed inexplicable by the MP - came just when the Government had provided £6m of funding to the Energy Saving Trust for its three year Powershift programme which promotes the use of alternative fuels like compressed natural gas by providing grants of up to half the capital cost of converting a vehicle.

The MP said: "I want to see companies here in Pendle and elsewhere convert their vehicles from diesel to environmentally friendly fuels and take advantage of the fiscal incentives introduced by the Government including a Vehicle Excise Duty concession of up to £500 for lorries and buses that meet very stringent emissions to be introduced from January 1999"

The MP wrote to the Transport Minister Glenda Jackson who told him the Government is actively considering the role for "low emission zones" which restrict

vehicle access to only the cleanest vehicles in pollution 'hot spots', and which will encourage the use of alternatively powered vehicles.

Note to editor: The Deputy Prime Minister launched the ALTER project at the Informal Transport and Environment Council in April of this year. Local authorities participating in this Europe-wide initiative will commit themselves progressively to replace their public vehicle stock with new lower emission vehicles, and to allow access to low emission zones only to vehicles that meet stringent emission standards.

For Immediate Release. No 286/98 Tuesday 20 October 1998

MP WARMS TO WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pleased to see that help is on the way to pensioners this winter in the form of Winter Fuel Payments. The scheme is broadly in line with last winter's payments which were made between January and March 1998. Depending on their circumstances pensioners will get either a £50, £20 or £10 payment. The only substantive change is to add to the list of eligible pensioners, those who are receiving a Industrial Injuries Benefit - this is to ensure that everyone over state pension age receiving a Social Security benefit receives a payment.

The MP said: "It warms my heart to see this! These payments will be a great help to pensioners who too often worry about big fuel bills over the winter. £500 million has been committed over the next three years to continue Winter Fuel Payments."

Note to editor: Payments will be made automatically without the need to claim. Poorest pensioners (ie those receiving Income Support or income based Jobseeker's Allowance) will receive their payment of £50 by the end of November. Payments will be sent by girocheque to the pensioner's home address. All other pensioners getting one of the benefits listed below will receive a payment of either £20 or £10 during January 1999.The Benefits Agency will run a Winter Fuel Payment Helpline again this winter which can be contacted for further information. The telephone number is 0645 151515. Information leaflets will be available in Benefit Agency offices, doctor's surgeries and Age Concern offices.

For Immediate Release. No 287/98 Tuesday 20 October 1998

MP HONOURED BY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to be elected as a Honorary Member of The Landscape Institute and he will be formally presented with a certificate on 4 November 1998 at The Institute of Civil Engineers in London.

The MP said: "I feel very privileged to receive this accolade. Landscape architects have an enormous contribution to make when it comes to creating quality places for us to live and work as well as helping to conserve fine landscapes."

The Landscape Institute want design, management, planning, and science skills to be available at a senior level of government, local and national. Too often landscape architects are only brought into projects at a very late stage.

The MP continued: "Here in Pendle we have got lots of terraced streets and landscape architects could make an enormous difference to our local environment and that means more than planting the odd tree. The government is already playing its part in encouraging good landscape design and I would like to see local authorities including landscape architects a bigger say."

Note to editor: The government has recently published a good practice guide, 'Places, Streets and Movement', dealing with the layout of residential roads and footpaths, which is intended to help local authorities and developers create better quality residential areas. Landscape design has an important

part to play in this. The government also intends to publish a more general good practice guide on design issues in the development system with the aim of promoting earlier and greater attention to design issues in the development process, encouraging collaboration within and between the professions and developers, and raising standards.

For Immediate Release. No 288/98 Tuesday 20 October 1998

BLACKO WIND FARM

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is all in favour of renewable energy sources but has grave reservations about proposals to erect wind turbines on Burns Moor, Blacko.
The MP said: "Wind farms can be a terrible blot on the horizon - visible for miles around. They can too easily industrialise the landscape. I have yet to see the details of the planning application that will be going to Pendle Council but I have always been opposed to wind energy schemes that dominate the skyline."
The MP continued: "Here in Pendle we have some of the nation's finest landscape on our doorstep. Just like the Green belt, these landscapes need protection against inappropriate development. They would never put wind farms on Hampstead Heath - so why Blacko? I would like to see the Government look more at offshore schemes which can harness windy conditions out at sea"
According to press reports the plans are for 15 turbines on Burns Moor, Blacko, near the former Greystones pub on the A682 Nelson-Gisburn road.

For Immediate Release. No 289/98 Monday 26 October 1998

MP TO GIVE WESTMINSTER WELCOME TO PENDLE'S OLD SOLDIERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be saying hello to some of Pendle's old soldiers at the Royal British Legion's Parliamentary Open Day in the Palace of Westminster this Wednesday (28 October).
The MP said: "I shall be meeting the Lancashire County Field Officer, Robert Ellis, and others from the British Legion. I have met Robert many times at the Remembrance Day parade at Colne and, at this time of year in particular, we should all reflect on the enormous debt we owe to those who fought and died defending our country and its freedoms."
The MP will, as usual, be attending this year's Remembrance Day parades and services in Nelson, Colne and Barnoldswick.

For Immediate Release. No 290/98 Tuesday 20 October 1998

CLIMATE CHANGE POINTS TO A WET AND WINDY PENDLE

A new study by the UK Climate Impacts Programme points to a windier and wetter Pendle in the years ahead. The news has dismayed local MP, Gordon Prentice, who says climate change is now a reality which we neglect at our peril.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Climate change is no joke. It will have a major impact on every aspect of our lives - from what can be grown on our agricultural land to what we have to pay in our insurance premiums."
The MP's statement follows warnings from Environment Minister Michael Meacher who said: "The UK climate change scenarios suggest an increase in temperature of up to 3 degrees Celsius by the end of the next century and the potential for more flooding, very severe winter gales and unusually hot days. These scenarios illustrate the very real threat that climate change represents to us in the UK and underlines the importance that the Government attaches to meeting its targets and tackling the threat of climate change in the long term."
Note to Editors: The UK is taking a leading role in addressing the threat of climate change. In Kyoto last December the EU agreed to a legally binding emission reduction target of 8% for the period 2008 to 2012. The United Kingdom Climate Impacts Programme was set up in 1997 and the scenarios developed there suggest that warming over the UK will be more rapid in the Southeast compared to the Northwest and wetter winters are likely in all scenarios. Changes predicted in the reports, include for example, a greater risk of flooding and very severe winter gales.

For Immediate Release. No 291/98 Wednesday 21 October 1998

MP UNLEASHES NEW ATTACK ON USE OF ANTIBIOTICS IN ANIMALS AS GROWTH PROMOTERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has unleashed a fresh attack on the use of antibiotics in animal feed as a growth promoter. The MP told Agriculture Minister Jeff Rooker this week that all meat from animals reared on growth promoters should be clearly labelled as such. The Minister said labelling was unnecessary.
In July the MP called for an end to the practice of putting antibiotics in the feed of farm animals as growth promoters, which can increase liveweight gains by 5 per cent to 8 per cent, according to species. The MP also says there are dangers of antibiotic resistance transferring from animals to humans.
Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "We don't have to pump farm animals full of antibiotics simply to promote faster growth. In Sweden they banned this practice back in 1986 and Denmark has just banned the use of virginiamycin - which has been used in animals for 30 years - because of its close chemical links with a new drug to be used in humans. They, like the rest of us, are worried about the transfer of antibiotic resistance from animals to human. I shall be pressing the Government to act."
The MP continued: "Antibiotics are wonder drugs but they must not be used indiscriminately on everyday things like coughs and sneezes which nine times out of ten will go away of their own accord. If we swallow antibiotics for every minor ailment they will lose their effectiveness when we really need them."
The MP added: "We are now seeing the latest lunacy which is anti-microbial disinfectants on the supermarket shelves and mattresses and all sorts of other household goods impregnated with anti
more follows

microbial solutions. If this latest fad catches on we are all in danger of developing antibiotic resistance. It is not good."

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, yesterday if he would ensure that meat from animals reared on growth promoters is labelled as such.

The Minister (Jeff Rooker) replied: The use of hormone growth promoters in food producing animals has been banned in the European Community since 1988. Any third country which permits the use of growth promoting hormones is required to guarantee that no animals to which they have been administered and no meat from such animals will be exported to the Community, Imports must be certified accordingly and Commission inspectors verify compliance with all the requirements.

Antibiotic growth promoters used in animal feed act in the gut of the animals and are not absorbed. Residues would not there-fore be expected in meat. Antibiotics used in veterinary medicine are all subject to a period of withdrawal before treated animals may be slaughtered for human consumption, or their products are marketed, to ensure no residues are present. Given the above information I do not believe it necessary to consider labelling.

In a supplementary question, the Pendle MP asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what percentage of carcasses in abattoirs are checked to ensure that antibiotics, coccidiostats, medical substances and growth promoters are not present in quantities above the maximum permitted levels.

The Minister replied: The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). is responsible for the surveillance for veterinary residues under Council Directive 96/23/EC. This requires Member States to carry out large scale sampling, on-farm and at slaughterhouses, to look for a wide range of veterinary medicinal products including antibiotics, coccidiostats, medicinal substances and growth promoters. Member states are required to take samples amounting to fixed percentages of animals (0.275% of cattle, 0.05% of pigs, 0.05% sheep, and for poultry 1 sample per 200 tonnes of dead-weight production, of which 90% are taken from abattoirs). The actual number of samples to be taken in a given year is determined by the number of animals slaughtered in the previous year, or which the Competent Authority forecasts will be slaughtered during the year, so that, within prescribed confidence limits, Member States can be satisfied that the results obtained are representative of what is happening nationally.

Note 2 to Editors: The House of Commons Agriculture Select Committee in a report published on 22 April 1998 said the evidence was now almost conclusive that antibiotic resistant organisms could transfer from animals to humans through food. In June the Pendle MP described the prospect in the Commons as a "biological Armageddon".

For Immediate Release. No 292/98 Monday 26 October 1998

MP WELCOMES NATIONAL SPEED POLICY REVIEW

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the Government's review of speed limits throughout Great Britain. He said traffic speeds in some residential urban areas are far too high and easing back on the accelerator could save lives, cut accidents, and lower vehicle emissions.

The MP spoke out as Transport Minister Lord Whitty was telling a meeting of local authority surveyors that the review of speed policy would be a three stage project, with the first phase exploring existing research on traffic speed and its effect. Stage two would involve the Government consulting people and organisations with a view on the subject. The final stage is the report which will take about a year to prepare.

The Pendle MP added: "Motorways are amongst our safest roads and I do not see any reason to cut the 70mph limit. In fact, I meet many people who say 80mph would be more realistic. However, the main point is the speed limit must be appropriate for the type of road. We can all think of a million examples where the speed limit is plainly wrong."

Note for Editors The White Paper, "A New Deal For Transport: Better for Everyone" committed the Government to undertaking a review of speed policy. It will cover the traditional road safety issues and will take account of the new casualty reductions target within the road safety strategy being designed to achieve that. It will also look at how speed management can mitigate as far as possible the adverse effects of traffic on the environment and on the general quality of peoples' lives. It will cover

all roads in Great Britain - urban, rural and motorways - and examine best practices in engineering, enforcement, education and publicity, and the steps needed to extend and develop them further for the achievement of Government policy objectives.

For Immediate Release. No 293/98 Monday 26 October 1998

MP BACKS NEW EMPHASIS ON REHABILITATION

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new drive by the Government to get the NHS and local authority social services working closely together to give higher priority to rehabilitating people who have suffered injury or illness.
The theme was echoed by Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, speaking at the Annual Social Services Conference in Brighton. The Health Secretary said: "Since taking over the Government we have placed great emphasis on the crucial need for the NHS and social services to work together more effectively. One area where more progress on joint working is required is in the rehabilitation of people who have suffered injury and illness. This has not had a very high priority in the past."
The Pendle MP added: "It is a tragic fact that many injuries if not treated promptly can leave people permanently disabled because they don't get the rehabilitation they need. Here in Pendle with our heavy reliance on manufacturing industry we seem to get more than our share of injuries and accidents. Anything that gets injured people up and about has got to be applauded."
"We need to look at the experience of rehabilitation schemes in countries such as Sweden. They have done a really good job over there."

For Immediate Release. No 294/98 Monday 26 October 1998

MP BATTLES DOGGEDLY FOR FAIR TREATMENT

Women police officers who want to train as dog handlers are being asked to jump through too many hoops says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.
In the Commons this afternoon the MP quizzed Home Office Minister, Kate Hoey, about the case of WPC Thomas whose ambitions to become a dog handler took a tumble when she only managed to do 9 out of the required 23 press ups. She was also required to raise a 80lb weight above her head.
The MP said: "This requirement is ludicrous. My researcher, Ruth Wilkinson, can only do three press ups! She has an enormous great dog and she controls the thing just by looking at it."
The Minister told the Pendle MP that a Home Office manual covered recruitment issues but, at the end of the day, it was a matter for the police forces themselves.
WPC Thomas received £5,000 from the Metropolitan Police in July this year when she won her sex discrimination case alleging the fitness test was discriminatory because men have greater upper body strength. The fitness test has since been changed. The 80lb weight above the head test has been dropped but women are still expected to do press ups - but fewer than before.

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 295/98 Tuesday 10 November 1998

PENDLE'S DESERTED MEDIEVAL VILLAGE MUST NOT BE DAMAGED says HERITAGE CHIEF

The deserted medieval village at Stock near Bracewell should remain undamaged despite the decision of Pendle Borough Council last week to allow the landowner to lay a track across the land.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, stepped into the controversy last month saying he was determined to prevent any damage to this ancient village which he described as an archaeological jewel.

The MP contacted the Chairman of English Heritage - the body responsible for looking after ancient monuments - to get an assurance that the proposed track would not churn up the site which has never been excavated.

English Heritage chairman, Sir Jocelyn Stevens, told the MP: "Stock is a good example of a deserted settlement, which was probably depopulated as a result of climate deterioration and the Black Death in the 14th Century. The remains of the houses, enclosures for livestock and the tracks which serviced the village survive as earthworks and as buried archaeological remains."

Sir Jocelyn continued: "The track would be laid on a geotextile fabric base which is laid on top of the existing ground surface, and which should prevent the hard-core of the track being compressed into the monument. In other words, the track laying will not damage the monument, and will, if circumstances change, prove reversible."

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I shall be watching like a hawk to ensure the planning consents are followed to the letter. This ancient deserted village belongs to all of us."

more follows:

DESERTED MEDIEVAL VILLAGE

Note to Editors: Letter from the Chairman of English Heritage, Sir Jocelyn Stevens, to the MP: "Thank you for your letter expressing your concern, and that of your constituents, Dr Mary Harrington and Mr Robert Kandt, about proposed works affecting Stock deserted medieval village.

"Stock is a good example of a deserted settlement, which was probably depopulated as a result of climate deterioration and the Black Death in the 14th Century. The remains of the houses, enclosures for livestock and the tracks which serviced the village survive as earthworks and as buried archaeological

remains. The importance of the site is reflected by its inclusion in the schedule of ancient monuments maintained by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

"English Heritage provides advice to the Secretary of State on sites which should be added to the schedule, and whether boundaries of existing monuments should be revised. Stock is due to be considered next year, and it may be, as a result of a rapid professional assessment by our staff, that the extent of the scheduled monument is increased. However, we did not believe it would be proper to delay consideration of an application for scheduled monument consent submitted by one of the owners of the site, Mr John Oversby, pending the outcome of our review of the scheduled area. Mr Oversby, one of four owners of different parts of the monument, is a farmer who requires access to his fields for machinery. The legislation allows Mr Oversby to drive vehicles over the monument; this can cut up the ground in wet weather, thus exposing the archaeological remains to risk. Although English Heritage can initiate prosecution of an owner in the event of damage, we prefer to work in partnership with owners to avoid disturbance to the monument. In these circumstances Mr Oversby's proposal to lay a track to carry the farm machinery, thus reducing the risk of damage to the site seemed to us a positive one.

"Mr Oversby's application for consent specified that the track would be laid on a geotextile fabric base which is laid on top of the existing ground surface, and which should prevent the hard-core of the track being compressed into the monument. In other words, the track laying will not damage the monument, and will, if circumstances change, prove reversible. It was on this basis that English Heritage advised the Department for Culture, Media and Sport that consent should be granted. The Secretary of State agreed with this advice and granted consent, subject to Conditions, on 20th August 1998.

"I understand that Dr Harrington and Mr Kandt have offered Mr Oversby the use of one of their own tracks to access the fields in this area, and if agreement could be reached this could provide an acceptable alternative. I do, however, take the view that this should be a private matter between Mr Oversby, Dr Harrington and Mr Kandt. In summary I believe that the proposed track will not cause physical damage to the monument. It is reversible, and it may save the site from damage by farm machinery in wet weather. I am sorry if your constituents feel that English Heritage has not acted as they would have wished in this case, but hope you will understand the reasons for the advice we have given to the Department for Culture Media & Sport. If you wish to discuss the matter further the Inspector of Ancient Monuments would be happy to hear from you.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

No 296/98 Embargoed until Tuesday 27 October 1998

MPs' HEALTH TO BE TESTED BY WORKPLACE HEALTH CAMPAIGNERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will have his ears, lungs and nerves tested at the Commons by local workplace health campaigners today (Tuesday). The tests are part of a campaign to provide to patients in GP surgeries with better advice on workplace illnesses like deafness, asthma and RSI.
The National Association of Occupational Health Projects, which is running the tests, will be urging MPs to persuade Health Ministers and their local Health Authorities to improve the provision of advice on work-related illnesses.
Last year, over 2 million people in Great Britain reported that their work had made them ill, but many people don't realise that their illness has been caused by their work. The National Association is made up of local health projects and typically, they bring together health professionals, work safety experts and employers and trade unions to help GPs identify work-related aspects of ill-health.

The Pendle MP said: "Occupational illness costs the nation a small fortune - £5 billion a year in days off sick and it costs thousands of people their jobs, their livelihoods and sometimes their lives."

Note to Editors: A photo follows separately

For Immediate Release. No 297/98 Wednesday 28 October 1998

NO PARDON FOR THE PENDLE WITCHES

The Government has told local MP Gordon Prentice there will be no Free Pardon for the Pendle Witches, hanged in 1612.

The Pendle MP took up the issue is response to the vigorous campaign mounted by his Barnoldswick constituent, Jim Skinner, who has been crusading for a Free Pardon for years.

Home Office Minister, Alan Michael, told the MP: "The Pendle Witches were apparently convicted according to the law at the time, harsh though it seems by modern standards. As I have indicated, the Home Secretary would generally consider intervening in a case such as this only if evidence came to light which showed conclusively that the Pendle Witches did not commit the crimes with which they were charged. On the basis of the material we have seen, the Pendle Witches' case does not appear to be one where it would be appropriate for the Home Secretary to recommend a posthumous Free Pardon."

Speaking from Westminster, Gordon Prentice said: "I know Jim Skinner will be immensely disappointed. With the passage of the centuries, the Pendle Witches still remain guilty as charged."

Note to Editors: Thank you for your letter to Jack Straw, enclosing this one from Mr Jim Skinner... requesting a Royal Pardon for the Pendle Witches, who were hanged in 1612.

You may find it helpful if I explain broadly the policy and conventions relating to the Royal Prerogative of Mercy and the particular factors which have a bearing on the question of a posthumous Free Pardon.

By constitutional convention, the Home Secretary is responsible in England and Wales for recommending to Her Majesty the exercise of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy to grant a Free Pardon. However, by long-standing convention, he would generally only do so in respect of offences where it is impossible to refer the case to the Court of Appeal, and if new evidence had come to light which demonstrated conclusively that the individual did not commit the offence.

The effect of a Free Pardon is that the conviction is disregarded to the extent that, as far as possible, the person is relieved of all penalties. Only the courts have the power to quash a conviction, reflecting the constitutional position that the courts and not the Government decide whether a person is guilty of a crime. The Secretary of State's powers to intervene are thus necessarily used sparingly.

Against this background, the granting of a posthumous Free Pardon is extremely rare. In recent times only one such Pardon has been recommended. In cases as old as that of the Pendle Witches, it is of course particularly difficult to obtain any conclusive evidence that no offences were committed, and to apply modern morality and criteria.

The Pendle Witches were apparently convicted according to the law at the time, harsh though it seems by modern standards. As I have indicated, the Home Secretary would generally consider intervening in a case such as this only if evidence came to light which showed conclusively that the Pendle Witches did not commit the crimes with which they were charged. On the basis of the material we have seen, the Pendle Witches' case does not appear to be one where it would be appropriate for the Home Secretary to recommend a posthumous Free Pardon.

Note 2 to Editors: Last July, the MP launched a new campaign to open up the dungeons at Lancaster castle. They held the Pendle witches in 1612 before they were found guilty and condemned to death for witchcraft. The dungeons which are 30 feet below the present day prison should be put on the tourist trail says the MP. At the time he said: "What happened in 1612 was a terrible miscarriage of justice

and we cannot right the wrongs of days gone by. But we can and should allow the public to visit these historic dungeons which housed the Pendle witches in darkness and without sanitation from April to August 1612. The lease on this ancient prison comes up for renewal in 2001 and I am pressing the Home Secretary to take the prisoners elsewhere and let the history buffs and the tourists in."
Note 3 to Editors: The Pendle witches, Old Demdike and Chattox, were accused of casting spells on people. Rumours brought the local Magistrate to investigate Demdike's home at Malkin Tower, near Pendle Hill. Human teeth stolen from graves at Newchurch were unearthed and a clay image was found. At the trial, chilling accounts of evildoings were brought to light as families accused each other of witchcraft. Ten women and one of their sons were found guilty and were hanged in 1612 in front of huge crowds.

For Immediate Release. No 298/98 Wednesday 28 October 1998

MP BACKS DRIVE TO CUT FIREWORK INJURIES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a Government drive to stop firework injuries which, he predicts, will be taking their dreadful toll over the next fortnight.
The move - backed by the British Association of Plastic Surgeons - focuses on the dangers of sparklers which burn at up to 2,000 C and caused more injuries than any other firework last year.
The Pendle MP said: "Fireworks in the wrong hands can prove to be disastrous and with 75% of all firework injuries happen on 5 November now is the time to remind parents and children to play safe on Bonfire night."
Note to Editors: Last year sparklers caused nearly a quarter of all firework injuries, accounting for 200 casualties - about 25% being children aged five or under.
The minimum age of sale of fireworks, including sparklers, is now 18 and retailers are no longer able to split retail packs of fireworks.

For Immediate Release. No 299/98 Thursday 29 October 1998

MP CALLS FOR LEVEL PLAYING FIELD IN UK/USA TRADE IN AEROSPACE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says jobs in aerospace companies in his Pendle constituency and throughout the UK are being placed in jeopardy because the USA's Federal Aviation Authority is dragging its feet in giving the firms its seal of approval.
American registered aircraft can only be repaired overseas by a company with FAA approval but the FAA has cut the number of its inspectors in the UK and there is now a back log of two years for 37 UK firms waiting for the thumbs up.
The MP raised the issue in the Commons this afternoon when he told Industry Minister Brian Wilson that the Americans "can repair UK registered aircraft but we can't repair theirs". The Minster told a delighted MP that more inspectors were expected to be in place by the end of the year and that the delay in granting approvals would shorten.
Speaking after the exchange, the MP said: "We approved 1,400 American aerospace repair companies about four years ago in the expectation the Americans would reciprocate. We are still waiting."
The MP added: "The repair of US registered aircraft is worth £200m to UK companies and with all this feet dragging by the Americans our industry is losing a

lot of US generated contract work. What is happening is having an enormous adverse impact in Lancashire - the County of Aerospace."

For Immediate Release. No 302/98 Wednesday 4 November 1998

IS NOTHING SACRED?

Local MP Gordon Prentice is outraged to learn of the number of thefts from Church buildings in England. In a reply to a Parliamentary Question, the MP was told by Stuart Bell MP, who represents the Church Commissioners, that according to figures from the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group (who insure most Anglican Churches in England) there were 1,974 cases of theft in 1997 with an insurance figure of £1.5 million.
The MP said: "I find it unbelievable that people can sink so low as to steal from Churches. Clearly, this is not the whole picture and there must be many more thefts from Roman Catholic and other denomination churches."
The MP added: "There is no record as to whether the churches were open to the public at the time of the thefts, but we are all becoming more aware that very many churches now have to be locked between services. This is a very sad state of affairs, if our churches aren't safe, then what is? Many of us, when visiting other countries, love to go into churches to see the wonderful architecture and artwork and this should not be denied to us in our own country because of these wicked people who consider churches to be 'easy pickings'. We must all be more vigilent to ensure our churches are safe."

For Immediate Release. No 303/98 Wednesday 11 November 1998

PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE MP AT MANSFIELD SCHOOL 11.30AM FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER 1998.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be dropping in at Mansfield School, Brierfield on Friday 13 November to chat to the teachers and pupils.
The MP said: 'I am looking forward to visiting the school again and meeting the staff and pupils. Mansfield has a lot going for it and I know that the staff are dedicated to ensuring that the young people have a good learning environment in their years at the school.'
The MP met Glynne Ward - the new acting headteacher of the school - in September and was impressed by her energy and commitment to education. The meeting signalled close co-operation between the two and resulted in an invitation to visit the school.

For Immediate Release. No 304/98 Wednesday 11 November 1998

PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE MP GOES NUTS AT OSWALDTWISTLE AT 2.00PM ON FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER 1998.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be gathering acorns alongside Burnley MP Peter Pike and the Lancashire Wildlife Trust at Foxhill Bank Nature Reserve, Oswaldtwistle. The acorns collected will be sent to the Forestry Commission nursery at Delamere in Cheshire where they will be grown on ready for planting back in their original site in the year 2000.
The MP said: 'This is part of a nation-wide 'Trees of Time and Place' campaign where millions of people across the country will be encouraged to collect seed from their favourite tree, grow it into a seedling and then plant their own tree for the new millennium.'
The MP is a keen supporter of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust especially their work in helping people to enjoy the natural world and their support for local community projects. Last Thursday the MP was elected as an honorary fellow of The Landscape Institute, an organisation committed to making our living and working areas greener and pleasanter places.

For Immediate Release. No 305/98 Thursday 12 November 1998

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF CEMENT MANUFACTURE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be taking part in a round table discussion tomorrow evening (Friday) at Colne Library, hosted by the North East Lancashire Friends of the Earth.
Representatives of the Environment Agency, the East Lancashire Health Authority and other organisations with an interest have been invited.
Last August, the MP welcomed the announcement by the Environment Agency banning the use of the controversial Cemfuel at Castle Cement's Clitheroe plant until the agency was fully satisfied with the arrangements for "sampling, analysis, storage and preparation for burning'. The move was widely welcomed by local campaigners who have argued that cemfuel is a danger to health.
At the time the MP commented: "I have been arguing for years that no substance should be used in cement kilns unless and until it has a squeaky clean bill of health."
Note to Editors: The Pendle MP has a long standing interest in the environmental impact of cement manufacture. In early 1996 he raised the issue in an adjournment debate in the House of Commons. At the time, the Conservative MP for Ribble Valley, Nigel Evans, complained about the alleged "interference" by the Pendle MP in matters concerning his (Evans) constituency.

For Immediate Release. No 306/98 Wednesday 11 November 1998

PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE MP AT LABOUR PARTY AUTUMN FAIR, NELSON CIVIC THEATRE 10.00AM SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER 1998

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be supporting his constituency Labour Party at its annual Autumn Fair this Saturday as they raise much needed funds.
The MP said: 'This is a marvellous event to raise cash for the local party and I hope that we get lots of people coming along to support us.
I for one shall be browsing the stalls to pick up a few bargains!"

For Immediate Release. No 307/98 Tuesday 10 November 1998

MP RENEWS CALL TO LEGALISE CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL USE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today renewed his call for the Government to move swiftly to legalise cannabis when prescribed by doctors. The MP - a long standing campaigner for the medical use of the banned drug - says cannabis and its derivatives can help people control and manage the symptoms of conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis.
The MP's appeal for action came on the eve of publication of the report on cannabis by the prestigious House of Lords Science and Technology Committee.
The report, due out tomorrow, is expected to call for cannabis to be returned to the medicine chest. It was banned by the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act. Before then it was often prescribed by doctors in tincture form.
Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government is too often afraid of its own shadow and what the tabloids may say. The plain fact is cannabis can help people with conditions which do not necessarily respond to conventional medicine."
"The BMA wants cannabis legalised for medical use. Now the Lords Select Committee has added its voice. And even the Townswomen's Guilds have called on the Government to legalise cannabis for medical use. So, what are we waiting for?"
Note 1 to Editors: On 8 December last year, the Pendle MP joined Grimsby MP, Austin Mitchell, and leading academics in a round table meeting with Health Minister Paul Boetang in a bid to persuade the Government to legalise cannabis for medical use. On the following day (9 December 1997) the British Medical Association published a report which argue for the legalisation of cannabinoids - or cannabis derivatives - which have medical uses. *more follows*

Note 2 to Editors: The Pendle MP is secretary of the All Party MS Group.
Note 3 to Editors: The following article on the legalisation of cannabis for medical uses, written by the Pendle MP, appeared in the Independent on Sunday on 5 October 1997:
In July this year the British Medical Association voted overwhelmingly for CANNABIS products to be made available for medical use, if this happens it will simply return us to the position which applied before 1973, when the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act came into force, outlawing medical use of the drug. Before then doctors could prescribe CANNABIS which was often dispensed in tincture form, like cough mixture.
Later this month the BMA's Board of Science will, it is believed, recommend wider use of the drug. This will reflect opinion within the profession which is moving sharply in favour of legalisation for medical use, The BMA magazine's Doctors Decide Panel of over 100 hospital doctors and GPs wants CANNABIS to be available on prescription. In an article in the BMA News Review earlier this year, 78 per cent of hospital doctors and three in five GPs agreed that the drug should be available for therapeutic purposes.
There is no doubt in my mind that CANNABIS and CANNABIS derivatives can help people cope with a variety of medical conditions.

The drug has for centuries been regarded as having therapeutic value even if, these days, its efficacy is challenged. There is masses of anecdotal evidence from people suffering from MS, for example, which backs the claim that the drug really works. It can help reduce tremors and spasms and ease movement. Some people with Aids say it improves their appetite. It can help in the treatment of glaucoma.

Tragically, because its medical use is unlawful it makes research much more difficult than it need be because a special Home Office licence is needed for any drug trial.

Despite this, in 1995, the previous government was forced to lessen the controls on dronabinol, one of the active ingredients c)f CANNABIS, after the World Health Organisation recommended that this derivative had therapeutic value as an anti-emetic for patients undergoing chemotherapy for cancer.

The Misuse of Drugs Act puts CANNABIS in Schedule 1 - drugs subject to the strictest controls on the grounds that they have allegedly little or no medical value and cause social problems through misuse. Besides CANNABIS, the list includes LSD, mescaline, raw opium and coca leaf.

There is a powerful case for taking CANNABIS into the Schedule 2 list of controlled drugs with medical use, such as morphine, methadone and amphetamines, allowing qualified doctors lawfully to prescribe drugs that they believe will benefit patients.

For Immediate Release. No 308/98 Tuesday 10 November 1998

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL RECEIVES ROYAL ASSENT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the passage into law this week of the Human Rights Bill.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The new Act 'brings rights home' and gives people access to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention of Human Rights under United Kingdom law. The most important change is that people who feel their human rights have been violated will now be able to have their case judged here in the UK rather than having to traipse over to Strasbourg with all the expense and delay involved in mounting a case there."

Home Secretary Jack Straw added: "This is the most significant statement of human rights in the UK since the 1689 Bill of Rights. It will strengthen representative and democratic Government. Nothing in the Act removes the freedoms people already enjoy. Rather it complements the freedoms with positive rights that people can rely on if they believe the State or its institutions has treated them unfairly."

Note to Editors: The main provisions of the Act are: • Courts will be required as far as possible to interpret all legislation, whenever enacted, in a way which is compatible with Convention rights. • It will be unlawful for public authorities to act in a way which is incompatible with Convention rights. • When introducing legislation, Government Ministers will have to make a statement about the compatibility of the Bill with Convention rights. The main provisions of the Act will be implemented as soon as is feasible. But before this can happen considerable work needs to be done, including: • courts and tribunals need training to deal confidently with Convention related points; • all public authorities, not just central and local government, will need to understand and prepare for the obligations the Act will place upon them.

For Immediate Release. No 309/98 Tuesday 10 November 1998

DON'T SLEEP WALK INTO PAYING BOGUS BILLS SAYS MP

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice is warning companies to keep their eyes open for bogus bills.

The MP said: "This latest batch of bogus bills has been brought to my attention by the National College of Hypnosis & Psychotherapy which is based here in Pendle. They were clearly wide awake to this form of extracting money by false pretences. The invoices the College received for £465.60 came from a company known as IT & T AG based in Switzerland and purported to be in respect of an advertisement in an International Business Directory."
The MP went on: "I have come across this practice before and I know that, particularly in large organisations, these fraudulent invoices can easily slip through. This is how these people make their money. They rely on companies not being vigilant."
The MP added: "I am taking this up with Ministers to see what can be done to stop this con trick dead in its tracks. In the meantime, we must all keep our eyes wide open."

For Immediate Release. No 310/98 Tuesday 10 November 1998

LOCAL NHS GETS A SHOT IN THE ARM

Health chiefs in East Lancashire will be dancing with delight at the news today that the area's Health Authority will receive a big cash boost next year, predicts Pendle MP Gordon Prentice..
Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, who visited the ELHA HQ last week, told the MP that £349.89 million would be handed over to the health authority next year - a cash increase of 6.57% and a real terms increase of 3.97%.
Gordon Prentice said: "This is a real shot in the arm for the area."
Note to Editors: The Health Secretary's letter, dated 10 November, to the Pendle MP reads: Dear Gordon
I have today announced large real terms funding increases for all of the 100 Health Authorities in England. This is part of the £21 billion three year settlement announced in July, which was the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review, This is the biggest cash injection in the history of the National Health Service. It is also a settlement that will provide stability and enable the NHS to plan ahead.
This increase is delivering investment for reform to make sure that patients everywhere get the high quality health service that they deserve.
For the first time, money earmarked for modernising and developing services will be put in a special NHS Modernisation Fund amounting to over £1 billion next year. This is targeted cash for change, Every penny will be spent on improving and modernising the NHS to make it fit for the 21st Century,
The good news is that East Lancashire Health Authority will receive an allocation of £349.89 million for 1999/2000. This is a cash increase of 6.57% and a real terms increase of 3.97%. This will benefit your constituents and demonstrates clearly the Government's commitment to the NHS.

For Immediate Release. No 311/98 Wed 11 November 1998

MP BACKS MOVE TO MAKE CRIMINALS "COUGH UP"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves by Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to make criminals hand over the proceeds of their crimes.

Straw pledged this week that criminals who lead extravagant lives based on the profits they make from crime will be made to "pay up".
The Pendle MP said: "I was shocked to learn that only a paltry £10 million worth of all criminal assets are confiscated in England and Wales each year. Clearly more needs to be done to target criminals living in the lap of luxury - financed by their victims."
Note to Editors: A report by the Home Office Working Group on Confiscation, published by the Home Secretary for consultation, proposes sweeping changes to the confiscation and money laundering laws. It is based on wider powers for the courts to order the forfeiture of proceeds of crime in civil proceedings. Other major changes proposed by the document include: • a feasibility study for a National Confiscation Agency; • measures to tighten up on enforcement of criminal confiscation orders; • an extension of the criminal offence of failure to disclose, in the course of any profession, trade, business or other employment, knowledge or suspicion of money laundering; • new powers for the courts to make confiscation orders against absconders.

For Immediate Release. No 312/98 Monday 16 November 1998

MP PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR TODAY'S PENSIONERS

In its first 18 months in office, the Government has taken action over a wide front to help today's pensioners says local MP Gordon Prentice. But more needs to be done to ensure pensioners get a fair deal, he says.
Speaking in Nelson at the weekend, the MP said: "We will be introducing a guaranteed minimum income for pensioners from April 1999 of £75 a week for a single pensioner and £116.60 for a married couple. This will be done by increasing Income Support for the poorest pensioners by three times more than they would have got if we had awarded only the normal price uprating. It is also more than they would have got from a link to earnings."
"Older pensioners will get more. The guaranteed minimum income for single pensioners will rise to £77.30 at age 75 and £82.25 at age 80. The equivalent figures for couples are £119.85 and £125.30. All people receiving the basic state pension will have it uprated in line with prices. From April 1999 it will be £66.75 for a single pensioner and £106.70 for a married couple."
"The Government is piloting ways of ensuring that the poorest pensioners get the money to which they are entitled. Nine projects across the country, using modern technology and personal advisers, were set up last April. We are currently evaluating the results. The Government will be publishing its longer term proposals for pensions in a Green Paper later this year."

For Immediate Release. No 313/98 Monday 16 November 1998

MP WELCOMES AID FOR HARD HIT FARMERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the Government's £120 million cash injection to help beleaguered farmers in Pendle and elsewhere across the country.
Speaking from Westminster after the Commons statement by Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, the MP said: "The strategy is targeted to help the hard-pressed livestock

sector, and particularly those who farm marginal land. This aid is in addition to measures previously announced worth £150 million."
The MP continued: "The government recognises that hill farmers have had a difficult time and has decided that Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances for 1999 will be increased by £60m - increasing rates of HLCAs across the board by about 55%. The majority of producers will get the extra money during February and March 1999, the usual time for these payments to be made."
"The complete package is concentrated on those areas to which farmers have attached the greatest priority - targeted towards those farmers who have been the hardest hit, and are least able to sustain the drop in incomes currently being experienced. This is a short-term package to deal with the immediate difficulties, and get farmers through the winter. The medium and long term future for British agriculture is closely allied with the European Commission's proposals for the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy."
The MP added: "We must get away from crude production linked support towards a future where farmers can compete effectively in the marketplace. We also need to recognise the contribution that farmers on marginal lands make to the protection of the environment and the countryside."

For Immediate Release. No 314/98 Wed 18 November 1998

PENDLE DELEGATION TO QUIZ MINISTER ON KASHMIR

A delegation from Pendle is to meet Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett next Tuesday (24 November) in a bid to move the simmering conflict in Kashmir up the political agenda.
The delegation to the Whitehall offices of the Minister will be led by local MP, Gordon Prentice, and is likely to include Bob Wells whose son, Paul, disappeared in Kashmir in 1995. Also joining the delegation will be Council Leader Alan Davies, Cllr Khalid Mehmood, vice chair of the Kashmir Working Group and Abdullah Zaid and Mohammed Aslam from the Kashmir Welfare Association.
The MP said: "The conflict in Kashmir is a festering sore which is poisoning relations between Pakistan and India and is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Kashmiris. This conflict has been unresolved for over 50 years - despite the existence of valid UN resolutions - so we need to work ever harder to make people sit up and simply take notice. I hope the meeting with Derek Fatchett will take things forward."

Note to Editors: A Commons motion sponsored by the Pendle MP last month reads: That this House records that 27 October 1998 marks the 51st anniversary of the Indian occupation of large areas of the state of Jammu and Kashmir; notes that a peaceful solution to one of the world's longest running disputes appears no closer; welcomes the recent initiatives and statements made by both the Indian and Pakistan Governments and the US President in respect of the development of a constructive dialogue; views with the gravest concern recent events which have seen nuclear tests conducted by the governments of both India and Pakistan and the general increase in military tension across the Line of Control; believes that the world community can ignore at its peril the potential for nuclear confrontation in one of the most highly militarised areas of the world; expresses regret that the reports of human rights violations, particularly cases of extra judicial torture and death continue unabated; further believes that, as in the Middle East and Northern Ireland, a just and meaningful solution to this problem cannot take place without the full involvement of all parties involved, particularly the Kashmiri people themselves; calls on the Government not only to support vigorously the UN resolutions of 1948,1949 and 1957 which upheld at the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination through a UN supervised plebiscite but also to take lead in raising these matters again in the UN.

For Immediate Release. No 315/98 Tuesday 17 November 1998

MP HAILS DECISION TO END TO COSMETIC TESTING ON ANIMALS

The decision to end the testing of cosmetic ingredients on animals has been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice. He says the move is long overdue.
Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Using animals to test cosmetics is one of those issues that fires up young constituents of mine especially. I get a steady stream of letters on the subject."
The MP's statement follows the announcement by Home Office Minister George Howarth. Following consultation with industry, UK companies with authority to carry out such tests have agreed to voluntarily give up their existing licences. The Home Office will not issue any further licences. The move comes a year after the Government's announcement of an end to the use of animals in the UK for the testing of finished cosmetics products.
Mr Howarth said: "Ongoing dialogue between the Government and the cosmetics industry has now secured a voluntary ban on all use of animals for the testing of cosmetics in the UK. These measures will further improve the operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. All applications for animal testing are dealt with on an individual basis and, before any tests can go ahead, the following criteria must be satisfied: - there are no alternatives; - any suffering to animals is outweighed by the potential benefit to humans; and - the minimum suffering is caused to the smallest number of animals The vast majority of procedures are done for medical or biological research reasons. However, until alternative tests are available, animal testing is necessary to both ensure the safety of products and enable future advances in medicine."

For Immediate Release. No 316/98 Tuesday 17 November 1998

HOUSING BENEFIT SHAKE UP

Key proposals to simplify and improve Housing Benefit (HB) are to be presented to the Prime Minister in January says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP has targeted HB as an area "ripe for review".
The aim of the review is to make Housing Benefit easier to understand and administer and make the benefit fairer and less prone to fraud and abuse. The MP was speaking as Social Security Minister Angela Eagle was telling the Local Government Association that the present system can be a barrier to work and its complexity can cause frustrations and worry for many claimants.
Last month, the Pendle MP caused consternation amongst some local landlords when he claimed a number of them "kept their tenants in utter squalor and are indifferent to the concerns of owner occupiers living nearby their deteriorating properties." At the time the MP said: "As we all know, in some areas of Pendle houses can be acquired for as little as £10,000 - £14,000 and in some cases you can pick up a house for as low as £3,000. Private landlords can buy up large numbers of very cheap properties and collect rent in the form of housing benefit probably at a minimum rent of around

£65 per week. This would give a private landlord a return of a staggering 33% per year on a £10,000 property."
Note to Editor: Housing Benefit is non-contributory, income related and tax free. It is administered by local authorities with a caseload of 4.8m costing £11.6 billion.

For Immediate Release. No 317/98 Wed 18 November 1998

PENDLE MP QUIZZES "CABINET ENFORCER" OVER DETAILS OF LIB LAB DEAL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today alleged that Liberal Democrat MPs on the Cabinet Joint Consultative Committee will receive classified material not available to Labour Members of Parliament.
Cabinet Office Minister, the "enforcer" Jack Cunningham told the MP that discussions were at a very early stage and it was too early to say if classified material was likely to be supplied to them. The Pendle MP told the Commons the remit of the joint Cabinet committee was set to expand beyond constitutional issues to take in Europe, health, welfare reform and education.
The Minister said: "There are simply to be discussions between Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader Alan Beith and myself about the success of the co-operation between Liberal Democrats and the Government in driving forward the constitutional agenda which was a shared agenda between us, to reflect on how the joint consultative committee has operated in the past and to see whether it is possible to widen and or deepen the process. But those decisions have yet to be taken. We have simply begun the process and one meeting has taken place."
The Pendle MP told the House: "Liberal Democrat MPs are to receive classified documents which are not available to MPs sitting on Government benches. Do Liberal Democrats have to sign the Official Secrets Act and what is the penalty which will apply if they leak that confidential information?"

For Immediate Release. No 318/98 Tuesday 17 November 1998

CONTRACTOR PAYS THE PENALTY FOR SHODDY WORK ON M65

Poor quality workmanship which caused parts of the M65 to break up less than a year after the new road link at Blackburn was laid will be paid for by the contractor, says Pendle MP Gordon Prentice. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Motorways cost an arm and a leg and at £9m a mile we all expect a top quality job - not something jerry built that will wear out in a year." The MP's comments followed a letter from the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency, Lawrie Haynes, who explained that small areas of the road surface of the M65 Blackburn Southern Bypass had proved to be sub standard and had to be replaced for safety reasons. Mr Haynes went on: "The problems only became apparent after traffic started to use the road, which was opened in December 1997. The cost of the work was met by the Contractor who originally constructed the Motorway."

Note to Editors: The following letter was sent to the Pendle MP on 17 November by the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency: "I have been asked by the Transport Minister, Glenda Jackson, to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the M65 at Blackburn. Small areas of the road surface of the M65 Blackburn Southern Bypass have proved to be sub standard and have had to be replaced for safety reasons. The problems only became apparent after traffic started to use the road, which was opened in December 1997. The cost of the work was met by the Contractor who originally constructed the Motorway. The work was carried out at night to keep inconvenience to traffic to a minimum and was completed in the early hours of Friday 13 November."

For Immediate Release. No 319/98 Tuesday 24 November 1998

PENDLE TEXTILE WORKERS LOBBY PARLIAMENT

A big contingent of textile workers from Pendle is expected at Westminster tomorrow (25 November). They will be joining a lobby to press the case for textiles which still employs over 370,000 people, 10% of the UK's manufacturing work force.
They will be met by local MP, Gordon Prentice, a long time campaigner for the industry. The MP is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Carpet Group. The lobby co-incides with the publication of the publication of the "Social Partners' Action Plan for Clothing and Textiles" - drawn up by the British Apparel and Textile Confederation and the three main trade unions which organise in the industry - the T&G, KFAT and the GMB.
The T&G's "Plan for Textiles", also published to co-incide with the lobby, says UK textiles production is worth over £17 billion with roughly half produced in the clothing and knitwear sectors and the other from the textile sector. The UK ranks fourth in Europe in terms of the value of textile goods produced.
The Pendle MP said: "The textile industry has been going through a difficult time recently and we are not out of the woods yet. However I am hopeful that we are through the worst. The value of the £ is weakening against the currencies of our competitors and that will help exports."
"The industry is a big employer in Pendle and its survival and prosperity really matters."

For Immediate Release. No 320/98 Tuesday 17 November 1998

TOO YOUNG TO VOTE BUT NOT TOO YOUNG TO MATTER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be celebrating Universal Child Rights Day on Friday 20 November 1998 by holding a Children's Constituency Surgery at Primet County Primary School, Colne. The young people will get a chance to discuss the subjects that really matter to them and put their local MP on the spot.
Gordon Prentice MP said: "I find talking to children very refreshing. They can ask some very taxing questions and bring a unique slant to issues that I would probably miss!"
The MP added: "The most crucial element of a successful surgery is that young people should feel they have been able to ask questions on matters of importance to them, and have those questions taken seriously and answered respectfully."

Note to Editor: The nationwide Put It To Your MP event has been organised by UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, to underline children's right to be heard. The right to be heard is part of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - which has been signed by Britain and every other country in the world except two (Somalia and the USA). It says that every child has the right to be heard by those whose decisions affect them. Children may be too young to vote but they are not too young to matter.

For Immediate Release. No 321/98 Tuesday 24 November 1998

MP TO QUIZ SCIENTISTS PRODUCING ANIMAL GROWTH PROMOTERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting the Merseyside plant of the US pharmaceuticals giant, Eli Lilly, this Friday, 27 November.
The MP was invited to tour the facility in Speke by their Chief Executive, Joe Adamson, in the wake of the MP's critical comments earlier this year on the use in farm animals of low level doses of antibiotics as a way of promoting growth. The company makes growth promoters.
Last month, the Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, unleashed a fresh attack on the use of antibiotics in animal feed as a growth promoter. The MP told Agriculture Minister Jeff Rooker that all meat from animals reared on growth promoters should be clearly labelled as such. The Minister said labelling was unnecessary.
In July the MP called for an end to the practice of putting antibiotics in the feed of farm animals as growth promoters, which can increase liveweight gains by 5 per cent to 8 per cent, according to species. The MP also claimed there are dangers of antibiotic resistance transferring from animals to humans.
Note to Editors: The House of Commons Agriculture Select Committee in a report published on 22 April 1998 said the evidence was now almost conclusive that antibiotic resistant organisms could transfer from animals to humans through food. In June the Pendle MP described the prospect in the Commons as a "biological Armageddon".

For Immediate Release. No 322/98 Wed 25 November 1998

MINISTER PLEDGES NO LET UP IN SEARCH FOR SOLUTION TO CRISIS IN KASHMIR

Foreign Office Minister, Derek Fatchett, yesterday told a delegation from Pendle Council that the Government remained committed to finding a solution to the crisis in Kashmir.
In a meeting in the Foreign Office the Minister told Bob Wells, father of hostage Paul, that his heart went out to him over his missing son. Mr Wells said his son had been sucked into a conflict of which he had been unaware and that he had only gone to Kashmir to photograph the beautiful landscapes.
The delegation was accompanied by local MP, Gordon Prentice, who described the meeting as "frank and honest". Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "The Minister gave us his considered assessment of the situation and the practical difficulties in getting a solution. We need to bring more people into the dialogue and not simply leave it to the Governments of Pakistan and India."

Pendle Council Leader, Alan Davies, described the role of the Kashmir Working Group in raising local awareness of the conflict and hoped this could be replicated in other councils nationwide. Delegation members, Mohammed Aslam and Abdullah Zaid of Pendle's Kashmir Welfare Association pressed the Minister to keep up the pressure for a solution as every passing day meant more misery for Kashmiris.
The MP urged the Minister to consider publishing a six monthly report detailing progress towards a settlement of the conflict.

For Immediate Release. No 323/98 Tuesday 24 November 1998

CALL FOR "FREEDOM TO ROAM" BY THE MILLENNIUM

A Commons motion backed by over 200 MPs calling for legislation to secure public access to open country will appear on the Commons Order Paper tomorrow (Wednesday). It has been tabled by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, a long time countryside access campaigner who says the time is right to act on access.
The Early Day Motion invokes the memory of the late John Smith and is supported by MPs from across the Labour spectrum. Five Liberal Democrats have also backed the motion.
The MP, who is a keen supporter of the 124,000 member Ramblers' Association, told Labour's Conference in Blackpool in October that voluntary access schemes would not work and it was time for the Government to deliver on its promise on the right to roam. The MP said: "85% of the public support the call for legislation with common-sense restrictions to protect the environment. crops and animals. The Government mustn't drag its feet on this issue where there is such tremendous public support."
Note to Editors: That this House believes that the millennium should be marked by fulfilling the promise set out in Labour's 1994 policy statement: "In Trust for Tomorrow" which pledges that Labour's commitment to the environment will be backed up with legally enforceable environmental rights including a right of, access to Common land, open country, mountain and moorland and that this would be a fitting tribute to the memory of the late John Smith who believed passionately in the people's right to enjoy the finest landscapes and countryside in Britain.

For Immediate Release. No 324/98 Wed 25 November 1998

PENDLE MP SAYS ROLLS ROYCE IS HERE TO STAY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, this evening dismissed reported remarks by Rolls Royce chairman, Sir Ralph Robbins, that the company could move to the United States if the UK adopted "some of the European labour laws".
The company is an important employer in the MP's Pendle constituency where it manufactures fan blades for its famed jet engines. Sir Ralph made his remarks in Australia where he reportedly said that costs were 30% higher for an employer in continental Europe than in the UK.
Sir Ralph said: "The last thing we want is the on-costs associated with the social costs of Europe, but I don't see any sign of its happening and the current government is not going down that path. But we will progressively move work to the United States if we find ourselves disadvantaged by that sort of social costs."

Commenting on the reported remarks, the MP said: "Since Sir Ralph spoke out, the company has made it clear that it has no intention of moving its entire operation to America. Moreover, Sir Ralph conceded in his speech that Britain is one of the best places in the world to manufacture high-technology equipment. The idea that the company could move lock, stock and barrel across the Atlantic is fanciful. The company has also developed links with BMW in Germany over the 700 series of engines so the situation is not cut and dried in the way that has been reported."
The MP added: "We have a deep reservoir of skills in Pendle and at the other 19 RR sites across the UK and the company draws on that expertise. And we mustn't forget that we are part of the European Union whose market is as big as the United States and, unlike America, the EU is set to expand."
"It is an incontestable fact that we have a very supportive Government here in Britain which has been good for aerospace. Since the General Election last year, Rolls Royce applied for - and received - launch aid for the development of the Trent engine. Airbus too has been helped by the new Government and it is now challenging Boeing head to head."
The MP added: "MPs with Rolls Royce plants in their constituencies regularly meet the top decision makers in the company and I have heard nothing to suggest that Rolls is unhappy or concerned about the drift of Government policy as it affects the industry."
"In fact, I have not heard a word of criticism about the Government's track record."
Note to Editors: In September, Rolls Royce announced it had won the £580m British Airways contract to put the Trent jet engines on the wings of the British Airways' new fleet of Boeing 777s. RR was up against stiff opposition from General Electric and Pratt & Whitney.
The North West is the largest single centre of the UK aerospace industry, representing a quarter of the total UK aerospace output, The region's unique know how and skills base is unsurpassed in the UK. The area produces £4 billion in aerospace turnover per annum and the industry supports over 60,000 jobs in the region.

For Immediate Release. No 325/98 Tuesday 24 November 1998

MP WELCOMES MOVES TO TACKLE BOGUS REFUGEES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed Government plans - outlined in the Queen's Speech - to crackdown on bogus asylum seekers. Speaking from Westminster the MP said the situation the Government inherited was "simply unacceptable".
The MP said: "I have constituents who have to wait forever to get their cases heard because the system is clogged up with bogus asylum seekers who use every trick in the book to stay in the UK even when their case has no merit whatsoever."
The MP continued: "The Observer's revelation's last Sunday about Mr Azad and his Welfare Centre in Manchester underlines the need to act with urgency. Mr Azad was reportedly telling all and sundry to lodge applications for asylum even when it was as plain as a pikestaff the application would have no merit. Many of these so called immigration advisers peddle worthless advice - and charge the earth for it. It is a scam." The MP has written to Home Secretary, Jack Straw, calling for early action.
Note to Editors: Immigration and Asylum Bill aims to speed up decisions on claims for political asylum, and to deter economic refugees from seeking to enter Britain. It will bring into effect proposals outlined in Home Secretary Jack Straw's White Paper, Fairer, Faster, Firmer, last July when the backlog of asylum-seekers stood at 52,000. Key proposals include a shake-up of benefit arrangements, reform of the appeal system and regulation of immigration advisers to weed out the unscrupulous who

exploit vulnerable refugees. A new Home Office agency will separate support for asylum-seekers from the main social security system, providing vouchers for food, clothes and toiletries for those in need, instead of cash handouts. Asylum-seekers will be dispersed to hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation around the country, in a move intended to relieve the pressure on inner London, Kent and Sussex. New penalties will be introduced for deception offences, to deter fraudulent applications.

For Immediate Release. No 326/98 Tuesday 24 November 1998

MP HAILS LIFTING OF THE BEEF BAN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the lifting of the beef ban. Over 4m animals have already been slaughtered as part of the BSE eradication plan.
Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is marvellous news for our farmers who have been struggling to keep afloat while the aftermath of the BSE crisis has been pulling them under. I expect beef exports to resume early in the New Year.
The MP said: "BSE was a poisonous inheritance for the new Government but we have tackled it with a vengeance. Our primary duty to the public is to ensure that the food we eat is safe and wholesome. That means policing the abattoirs and making sure that all the controls are in place."
The MP added: "We have to learn the lesson of BSE and it is this - We tamper with nature at our peril."
Note to Editors: The inquiry set up by the present Government into the origins of BSE and its consequences is continuing.

For Immediate Release. No 327/98 Tuesday 24 November 1998

STABLE GROWTH IS THE AIM SAYS MP

In an uncertain and unstable world, the Government is taking action to build a stable economy capable of sustained and steady growth says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. His message comes at a time of mixed signals on the economic front with job losses threatened at Buoyant and the Lear Corporation while other sectors such as aerospace are doing well.
Speaking at Westminster, the MP said: "We want individuals, families and businesses to be able to plan ahead with confidence. This contrasts with the boom and bust of the 1980s and early 90s when interest rates were at 15% for a whole year and a million manufacturing jobs were lost."
"Across the world, growth forecasts are being revised down. With one quarter of the world, including Japan, now in recession, no country is immune from the effects of the current instability in the world economy. Slower world growth makes it inevitable that growth in Britain next year will be more moderate."
"The recent half point cut in interest rates to 6% follows the global slowdown which the Bank of England agrees will lead to more moderate growth next year." The MP added: "The economy is continuing to grow and employment is up by 400,000 since the election - this means, even after high profile job losses, that 400,000 more people are in jobs. Over 160,000 young people have already entered the New Deal, and 90,000 people will benefit from pilot programmes for the long-term unemployed."

"The UK has already written off all aid debt to Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. The Government is not just tackling poverty at home, but helping the poorest countries."

For Immediate Release. No 328/98 Thurs 26 November 1998

MP SEEKS MEETING WITH LEAR CORPORATION AS COMPANY PREPARES TO LEAVE COLNE

The decision of the Lear Corporation to transfer its Colne operations to its Tipton site in the Midlands has shocked local MP, Gordon Prentice. Around 300 jobs will be lost from the area.

The MP said: "I am seeking an early meeting with the company to find out precisely where things stand. The announcement came as a shock but not, I have to say, as a surprise as there has been endless speculation recently about the company's long term plans for the Colne plant. Last year, I was told the company was going to stay in Colne but some jobs would go. Now, Lear says it is rationalising its operation and will locate everything at Tipton, blaming the growing competition from developing countries and the globalisation of production."

Note to Editors: In February last year, the MP was told by the Plant Manager, Peter Berry, that the site would not close and that there would be a major revamping of the Riverside and Green Road sites and, in the longer term, the demolition of the old Spring Gardens Mill. The MP was told that over the next two years some jobs would be transferred to be closer to the car plants. At the time Mr Berry told the MP: "Our company is a major supplier to the UK automotive industry and we are constantly under pressure to supply products from factories in close proximity to the automotive manufacturers. This has led to the establishment of a factory In Tipton in the West Midlands three years ago to serve Rover, Jaguar and Toyota. We are constantly under cost pressures and need to ensure that we have extremely efficient operations. This leads to a continual review of the way in which we conduct our business and currently we are continuing this process. We have not yet finalised our strategy for the period ahead but we have no plans to close the Colne operation. There could be some transfer of products from Colne to Tipton, and indeed vice versa, but we have some key processes at the Colne plant and we have not envisaged a withdrawal from that location.

For Immediate Release. No 329/98 Monday 30 November 1998

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR CRACKDOWN ON CORRUPT IMMIGRATION ADVISERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on Home Office Ministers to crackdown on corrupt immigration advisers. He said the revelations in The Observer about Mr Abdullah Azad, an immigration adviser operating out of the Welfare Centre in Manchester, were very disconcerting.

The MP said the reports alleged that Azad "was making forged passports available to people who walked in through the door" and that he was also telling people whose immigration status was in doubt that they should apply for asylum. The MP said the activities of people such as Azad meant more and more bogus asylum seekers, and longer queues for legitimate applicants.

Home Office Minister, Mike Mr O'Brien told the Pendle MP at Commons question time that 584 foreigners seeking entry into the UK had been picked up at ports and airports by the Immigration Service in fraudulent possession of UK passports between October 1, 1997, and September 30 this year.

Mr O'Brien told the MP: "You make very well the case for regulation of immigration advisers. The Home Affairs Select Committee recommended that in 1992. The Labour Party during the course of Bills in the last Government recommended it. We are determined to restore integrity to our asylum system by tackling bogus applicants. We have taken the tough decisions which the Conservatives ducked."

Note to Editors: The Queen's Speech contained proposals for an Immigration and Asylum Bill to speed up decisions on claims for political asylum and to deter economic refugees from seeking to enter Britain.

For Immediate Release. No 330/98 Tuesday 1 December 1998

NEW POLICE POWERS TO TACKLE TRUANTS BEGIN TODAY

New powers allowing the police to pick up truants and take them back to school come into effect today. The powers in Section 16 of the Crime and Disorder Act help the Government fulfil its promise of tackling youth crime and nipping offending behaviour in the bud.

Police constables will now be able to tackle truancy by returning the child back to school or other place designated by the local authority, if he/she believes the person is of school age and is absent without authority.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "A report from the Audit Commission found that a quarter of school age offenders have truanted significantly and research from the Social Exclusion Unit shows that nearly one in ten 15 year olds truant at least once a week. We simply cannot close our eyes to this problem. Young people of school age should be in school learning the skills they will need for the future."

Note to Editors: It is an offence for parents to allow a child to be absent from school without authority. Under the Crime and Disorder Act courts also have the authority to impose Parenting Orders on parents who do not take their truancy responsibility seriously. This could mean a parent having to take a child to school personally or be required to attend parenting classes. The Crime and Disorder Act requires local authorities and the police to form crime reduction partnerships, undertake detailed audits of specific crime problems affecting their communities and then develop individual strategies to tackle the identified crime problems.

For Immediate Release. No 331/98 Monday 30 November 1998

MP FIGHTS FOR BAN ON WOMEN'S BOXING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has pledged to continue the fight to ban women's boxing. The MP says prize fighting is rough, tough and too dangerous for women.

The MP spoke out after Sports Minister Tony Banks told him the Government had no plans either to ban or place restrictions on women's boxing.

In a Parliamentary reply today to the Pendle MP, the Minister said: "The Department has no plans either to ban or place any restrictions on women's boxing. I appreciate the strength of feeling on this issue, but I should stress that the Government does not control boxing or indeed any other sport in this country. We are, of course, keen to see that the proper medical safeguards and regulations are in place for all sports,

especially those which may carry a higher level of physical contact, and believe that the sport's governing bodies should remain primarily responsible for this."

Speaking at Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "Why anyone would want to go and see two women trying to knock the living daylights out of each other beats me."

The Pendle MP has vowed not to throw in the towel in his campaign to force the Government into a re-think.

For Immediate Release. No 332/98 Monday 30 November 1998

MP WELCOMES SOCIAL SERVICES SHAKE UP

A far reaching shake up to modernise the provision of social services across the country has been welcomed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The changes, announced in the Commons this afternoon by Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, will establish a new Commission for Care Standards for each region to regulate residential and domiciliary care, whoever provides it. A tough new inspection regime will ensure that children in care or the elderly in residential homes will be protected from the tiny number of people who are prepared to exploit and abuse them.

Speaking at Westminster after the announcement, the MP said: "Standards of care have been too uneven across the country and the Government is now telling councils and the private sector providers what is expected of them."

The MP added: "The new system will ensure a close eye is kept on children in care. The stories of abuse have been too chilling for words. We have a duty to ensure that children - and all vulnerable people - are kept safe and sound and are properly looked after."

For Immediate Release. No 333/98 Tuesday 1 December 1998

PRENTICE SUPPORTS DUTY-FREE BAN RETHINK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing efforts by Chancellor Gordon Brown to force a rethink over duty-free shopping in Europe. All duty-free sales on cross-border plane and boat trips within the EU will be scrapped at the end of next June, and only a unanimous decision of the 15 member states can win a reprieve.

Speaking at Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "The new German government is thankfully looking at this issue again and I hope there will be a sensible conclusion to this long running saga. Scrapping duty-free will cost thousands of jobs, and will hit regional airports like Manchester hard."

The Pendle MP has been pressing Ministers for a re-think. Last April he urged Gordon Brown to fight to save duty free sales within the European Union, due for abolition in July 1999. At the time, the MP said: "If duty free is axed in 1999 there will still be different tax rates in the various countries of the European Union. When the proposal was first thought up years ago, the European Commission believed there would be harmonised tax rates across the EU. That hasn't happened yet - if it ever does. So the rationale for abolishing duty free is simply not there."

Note to Editors: After July 1999 there will still be duty free shops on ferries and at airports but only passengers travelling outside the European Union will be able to take advantage of them. Duty free for travel within the EU will have ended.

For Immediate Release. No 334/98 Wednesday 2 December 1998

MP SEEKS MEETING WITH HEALTH MINISTER OVER "SNUB TO LOCAL DENTISTS"

Campaigning local MP, Gordon Prentice, is battling to get extra cash to local dentists. The Government has earmarked millions of pounds under its "Investing in Dentistry" initiative to improve the dental health of the nation but East Lancashire has lost out.
Speaking at Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "Local dentists have been left open mouthed by the decisions of the Department of Health. Money is going into areas of the country where the vast majority of people have got something to smile about. Here in Pendle and next door in Burnley we have the worst dental health in the country."
The MP added: "I am not prepared to grin and bear it. I want the Minister to meet Pendle dentists face to face."

For Immediate Release. No 335/98 Tuesday 1 December 1998

PENDLE MP SAYS NHS MUST DO MORE FOR PEOPLE WITH MS

Leading neurologists and MPs including Pendle's Gordon Prentice are backing a campaign launched by The Multiple Sclerosis society urging the Government to set national standards of care for people with multiple sclerosis.
The Pendle MP is secretary of the All Party MS Group in Parliament and President of the local Pendle MS Society.
A survey of health authorities, published today by the Association for Quality in Health Care, shows nearly half those responding do not contract at all for diagnostic, treatment or rehabilitation services for MS, the most common neurological disease affecting young adults.
Fifteen of the country's leading neurologists have signed a statement urging the Government to make a commitment to introduce standards to improve the quality of life of people with MS and their families.
The Pendle MP said: "Research by the MS Society reveals that one in three patients have their health managed only by their GP, not by a neurologist. Many are not referred to other specialists to deal with common symptoms like pain and incontinence. It also found that two thirds of neurology centres do not specify the services which should be available for MS patients. That has got to change.
I am calling for a full-scale debate in the House of Commons."
The MS Society's chief executive, Peter Cardy, said, "The research confirms our worst fears about the lack of proper care for people with MS. We are not blaming GPs. Most will only see a handful of MS patients during a working lifetime. They

cannot be expected to have knowledge in depth of such a complex illness. They can also be reluctant to refer patients to specialists they know are over-stretched."
"The lack of a proper specialist service for MS patients places an enormous burden on both GPs and the social services. The problem will not be resolved until the Government sets national standards of care which provide easy access for all people with MS to an integrated service of symptom and care management."
"The basis for them already exists. The Society and the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery have developed and published standards of service to which people with MS should be entitled, including prompt and sensitive diagnosis, multi-disciplinary care and access to new drug treatments."
Note to Editors: The following Commons Motion was tabled by the Pendle MP last week: "Multiple sclerosis (MS) is one of the major causes of disability and usually affects Younger people in the prime of their life. People with MS often develop the disease at a time Of life when they have family and working commitments. The disease may develop into a series of fluctuating periods of illness, where mobility, speech, memory and vision are severely affected. For other people these early fluctuations in the disease give way to a general deterioration in their condition.
The health service today does not meet the challenge of caring for MS Patients. Patients and their families often do not receive adequate counselling at the time of diagnosis. many people with MS do not have access to Proper rehabilitation services which could help them adapt to their disability. New drug treatments which have a beneficial impact on the quality of life of some MS patients are not widely available.
'There is an urgent need for national standards of multiple sclerosis health care which specify the range of services which MS patients should receive. We urge the Government to make a commitment to introduce national standards of MS healthcare ill order to improve the quality of life of People with MS and their families.

For Immediate Release. No 336/98 Wednesday 9 December 1998

PENDLE MP PLEDGES TO BRING IN RIGHT TO ROAM BILL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today told a countryside access conference in London that he intends to bring in a Private Member's Bill next year to give people the right to roam over open country. The MP came 5th in the ballot and is guaranteed time for a full day's Commons debate and vote on his Bill.
The MP was speaking at the Countryside Commission conference after hearing the Countryside Minister, Michael Meacher, explain the Government's approach.
Speaking afterwards the Pendle MP said: "Michael is a splendid Minister but why the delay in revealing the Government's intentions? It is like the dance of the seven veils! The consultation on the Government's Access Green paper closed on 5 June and all the submissions have now been analysed. 85% of the public support the call for legislation with common-sense restrictions to protect the environment. crops and animals."
The MP, who is a keen supporter of the 124,000 member Ramblers' Association, told Labour's Conference in Blackpool in October that voluntary access schemes would not work and it was time for the Government to deliver on its promise on the right to roam. The MP has the support of over 200 Labour MPs for a "Right to Roam" Commons motion he tabled last month.
Note to Editors: The Commons motion reads: That this House believes that the millennium should be marked by fulfilling the promise set out in Labour's 1994 policy statement: "In Trust for Tomorrow" which pledges that Labour's commitment to the environment will be backed up with legally enforceable environmental rights including a right of, access to Common land, open country, mountain and moorland and that this would be a fitting

tribute to the memory of the late John Smith who believed passionately in the people's right to enjoy the finest landscapes and countryside in Britain.

Note 2 to Editors: The Countryside Commission believes new thinking on access is needed. In a press release today, the Commission says:

"A new approach is needed to the provision of access in the countryside," Richard Simmonds, Countryside Commission Chairman, told a conference in London today. He told the meeting of policy makers, practitioners and landowners: "We need to determine how best to deliver and manage more useful access which fits in with other rural activity and industry."

A discussion paper provided by the Commission as a catalyst for debate sets out three ways in which access to the countryside might be made more effective and less contentious. They are:

* a more integrated approach, at both national and local levels, to get away from previous attempts to focus on different sorts of provision. Links need to be made between the different types of access, for instance the relationship between access to open country and the Rights of Way system;
* the scope for local diversity; certain general access rights and responsibilities need to be universal but some arrangements, like the limitation of access at different seasons, or in places where local traditions apply, and the need for closures could vary from the national pattern. Local or regional fora might have a place in determining this kind of detail;
* sufficient, well targeted resources. One of the most important factors in making access succeed is finding the resources that are needed and ensuring they achieve the maximum benefit. Highway authorities need to increase their investment in Rights of Way if the network is to be maintained and secured for the future. Greater access to open countryside will also require new money.

"It seems that all concerned are agreed that the main issue is not whether to accommodate more and better access, but how. Though there are a great many practical things that can and should be done to provide for and manage public access on the ground, perhaps it is the bridges need to be built between the different interests that are now most important in finding the best way forward," Mr Simmonds said.

For Immediate Release. No 337/98 Wednesday 9 December 1998

MP SLAMS LEAR CORPORATION's EXIT FROM COLNE

The Lear Corporation which recently announced the closure of its Colne plant and the loss of 300 jobs has been accused by the town's MP of not being open, honest and frank with its workforce or the local community.

On Monday this week, the MP met company chiefs who confirmed the shut down, saying it was no reflection on the employees, their skills or their performance on the job.

Speaking this week from Westminster, the MP said: "People have a right to know in detail why the Colne plant is to be axed. We were given a variety of reasons ranging from the demands of "just in time" manufacturing processes and the unsuitability of the Colne site. The American multi-national said it needed to consolidate and rationalise its operations."

The MP added: "Although Lear has clearly completed its strategic review which led to the closure decision, the management were unwilling to tell me which of the other

eleven UK Lear plants were to close and the reasons in each case. “The MP concluded: "I shall be liaising with colleagues at Westminster who have Lear plants in their constituencies to see where we go from here. The plain fact is that everyone has been led up the garden path by Lear who promised less than two years ago that they would be staying in the town although some jobs might move south to their West Midlands plant at Tipton. The whole thing leaves a very sour taste in the mouth."

For Immediate Release. No 338/98 Thursday 3 December 1998

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP at Higham C.E. School at 11.45am on Friday 4 December for presentation of "Sportsmatch Grant"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting Higham C.E. School Higham Hall Road, Higham at 11.45am on Friday 4 December for the presentation of a "Sportsmatch Grant".
The MP will be joining head teacher, Andrew Astbury, and sponsors from the area who are providing netball and football kit. The £700 sportsmatch grant has been used to purchase new goal posts.

For Immediate Release. No 339/98 Wednesday 9 December 1998

MP WELCOMES PINOCHET DECISION

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the Home Secretary's decision to allow the Courts to consider the extradition of General Pinochet to Spain.
Jack Straw received formal extradition requests for Senator Pinochet from the Spanish Government on 11 November, from the Swiss Government later that same day and from the French Government on 13 November.
Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "Mss murderers like General Pinochet should have no hiding place. It is right that he should face his accusers in Court. Jack Straw has made the right decision."

For Immediate Release. No 340/98 7 December 1998

LOCAL MP MEETS VISITORS FROM JAPAN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is going Japanese on Thursday 10 December 1998 when Ms Aiko Mizutani and her friend visit him at the House of Commons. Ms Mizutani is currently staying with a family in Barnoldswick and helping out at Coates County Primary school, Barnoldswick as part of a cultural exchange organised in Japan.
The MP said: "My knowledge of the Japanese language is non-existent so I'm relying on Ms Mizutani's excellent English when I meet her next week. I know the young people at Coates school have been delighted to have her there, she has been showing them the art of Origami and other traditional Japanese skills."
Ms Mizutani will be in Pendle for a total of 6 months after which she will be moving to another part of the UK before returning to Japan towards the end of 1999.

For Immediate Release. No 341/98 Wednesday 9 December 1998

MP BACKS STRATEGY TO MODERNISE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

A national strategy and an extra £700 million to deliver safe and modern mental health services have been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice.
Mental health problems are common. At any one time, around 1 in 6 people in the population experience a mental health problem such as anxiety or depression. Less than one per cent of the population suffers from severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia or manic depression.
The mental health strategy says that although the policy of care in the community has brought many benefits there have been too many failures, caused by underfunding, inadequate care, and poor management. It says the Government will modernise mental health services by providing safe, sound and supportive services, underpinned by extra resources and better treatment.
The Pendle MP said: "Mental health has been the Cinderella service of the NHS and there have been too many casualties as a result. I am thinking about the people themselves who need access to proper treatment and the public who have a right to be protected against the very small number of people with mental illness who are a danger not just to themselves but to others."
The stigma associated with mental health leads to discrimination and to social exclusion. Suicide is now the second highest cause of death in people aged under 35. Although the rate has begun to decline, there are still over 4000 deaths from suicide in England
each year.

For Immediate Release. No 342 /98 Thursday 10 December 1998

ABOLISH QCs SAYS PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for the abolition of QCs. He is backing a Commons motion which welcomes the Government's White Paper *Modernising Justice* and the *Access to Justice Bill* as the first real comprehensive plan to modernise the justice system for a century. The motion goes on to call for the abolition "of the expensive and anachronistic distinction of Queen's Counsel which has no place in a 21st century legal system".
The Pendle MP has been a long time critic of the system of appointing QCs. At it stands, the head of the judiciary, the Lord Chancellor, takes soundings from judges to see who should become QCs or "take silk" as it is quaintly known.
The MP said: "The bar is the last of the old style closed shops. We must open it up once and for all."
Last April, the MP called for a fundamental shake up of the legal profession. He told the Commons the legal profession was shot through with restrictive practices and was one of the last great institutions to remain unreformed. At the time, the MP said: "No-one really knows how QCs get there. It is a mystery. The Lord Chancellor takes

"informal soundings" from senior judges and the successful candidates just emerge. It is not good enough. The system needs to be open and transparent. I would abolish the institution of QC and move over to a unified legal profession combining the solicitor and barrister branches. This is quite usual in other common law jurisdictions such as the United States."

For Immediate Release. No 343/98 Thursday 10 December 1998

MP CALLS FOR EARLY STATEMENT ON ANTIBIOTIC GROWTH PROMOTERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon called on Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, to make an urgent Commons statement on far reaching proposals by the European Commission to ban the use of low level antibiotics in animal feed as growth promoters. The MP who urged the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, to find time for the statement next week, has waged a long campaign against this practice of feeding farm animals antibiotics simply as a way of putting on weight.
Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "The European Commission is moving rapidly to ban some of these compounds used in animals where the antibiotic is from the same family as ones used in humans. Some scientists believe antibiotic resistance could develop in farm animals and this resistance could transfer to humans with drastic consequences."
The Commission has proposed the banning of four antibiotic growth promoters, spiramycin, virginiamycin, bacitracin zinc, and tylosin phosphate, with effect from 1 January 1999. There would be provision allowing Member States not to operate the suspension until 30 June 1999. The suspension would be re-examined before 31 December 2000 following the results of monitoring for antibiotic resistance in farm animals.
The Proposal is to be presented to the Agriculture Council on 14/15 December.

For Immediate Release. No 344/98 Thursday 10 December 1998

TIME TO KICK THE HABIT SAYS MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves by the Government to cut smoking. In a Commons statement earlier today, Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, listed a battery of measures designed to help people addicted to nicotine.
In February 1994 the Pendle MP voted to ban tobacco advertising. He supported Kevin Barron's Private Members' Bill aimed at reducing smoking among young people. At the time the Bill failed to get enough support to become law.
Speaking from Westminster after the announcement, the MP said: "If young people start smoking it is incredibly difficult to shake the habit. And if they can't, then premature death and disease follow as sure as night follows day. Figures published in 1992 by the Health Education Authority showed that of the 1,099 people a year who die in Pendle, 205 die from diseases caused by smoking."
The MP added: "The local Health Authority has recently reminded us that compared to the rest of the country, people in East Lancashire have poor health. 18% more people

in East Lancs. are likely to die before the age of 75 than the national average. Giving up smoking is an excellent way to enjoy a longer and healthier life."

For Immediate Release. No 335/98 Monday 14 December 1998

READ ALL ABOUT IT! says PENDLE MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed a big cash boost to help youngsters with their reading and writing. Last week, Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett announced an extra £54 million for the National Literacy Strategy in primary schools for 1999-2000.

Two reports on the National Literacy Strategy show that pilot schemes of the new literacy hour in primary schools have proved a success, with its strong emphasis on tried and tested teaching methods, such as phonics, spelling and grammar.

The MP said: "The reports from OFSTED and the National Foundation for Educational Research show that teaching reading and writing effectively are becoming established in primary schools. Providing every pupil with a sound education in the basics requires a strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics, spelling and grammar, and the evidence shows that the literacy hour has raised standards significantly above normally expected progress."

"The National Literacy Strategy is backed by an extra £54 million for local education authorities and schools, which includes £5 million for family literacy programmes."

The MP added: "Two allocations of £1,000 to schools to help restock their libraries have already been given and support has been given to an extensive training programme for existing teachers and new requirements for trainee teachers."

For Immediate Release. No 346/98 Monday 14 December 1998

MP HAILS PLAN TO TAKE THE STRESS OUT OF HOUSE BUYING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has applauded Government plans to take the stress out of house buying. He says buying a house is unnecessarily complicated and needs to be simplified.

His comments follows the publication of a Government consultation paper on improving the process of house buying and selling in England and Wales. The plan will make house buying more efficient and effective.

The MP said: "Why should buying a house be a million times more complicated than buying anything else? The whole system is crying out to be streamlined."

Note to Editors: The consultation paper identifies the root causes of problems that make the home buying process unnecessarily lengthy, inefficient and stressful. The main features are: • A seller's information pack provided by anyone putting a home on the market. This could include a surveyor's report to give buyers and sellers a clearer idea of a fair price to ask and offer, avoiding nasty surprises later on. • Buyers to be better prepared by being encouraged to get, in principle, mortgage offers before making an offer for a property. • Mortgage lenders to supply title documents to the seller's solicitor or conveyancer within five working days of a request. • All local authorities to stick to their target of replying to requests for a standard search within ten working days. Other organisations, such as water companies, should set and keep to similar targets. • Lenders to make faster mortgage offers, keeping to a target of dealing with 80 per cent of mortgage applications within two working days of getting the information. • Lenders to look at offering buyers a more flexible type of loan to help them escape a

chain. • Insurers to be encouraged to develop and market new insurance policies to help protect buyers and sellers from gazumping and gazundering.

For Immediate Release. No 347/98 Wednesday 9 December 1998

MP SLAMS LEAR CORPORATION's EXIT FROM COLNE

The Lear Corporation which recently announced the closure of its Colne plant and the loss of 300 jobs has been accused by the town's MP of not being open, honest and frank with its workforce or the local community.

On Monday this week, the MP met company chiefs who confirmed the shut down, saying it was no reflection on the employees, their skills or their performance on the job.

Speaking this week from Westminster, the MP said: "People have a right to know in detail why the Colne plant is to be axed. We were given a variety of reasons ranging from the demands of "just in time" manufacturing processes and the unsuitability of the Colne site. The American multi-national said it needed to consolidate and rationalise its operations."

The MP added: "Although Lear has clearly completed its strategic review which led to the closure decision, the management were unwilling to tell me which of the other eleven UK Lear plants were to close and the reasons in each case."

The MP concluded: "I shall be liaising with colleagues at Westminster who have Lear plants in their constituencies to see where we go from here. The plain fact is that everyone has been led up the garden path by Lear who promised less than two years ago that they would be staying in the town although some jobs might move south to their West Midlands plant at Tipton. The whole thing leaves a very sour taste in the mouth."

For Immediate Release. No 348/98 Tuesday 15 December 1998

MP WELCOMES LOCAL APPOINTMENTS TO BOARD OF NEW NW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the appointment of Dennis Mendoros and Burnley's Kath Reade to the new North West Regional Development Agency. The Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott this week announced the board members for England's new Regional Development Agencies. Together with their Chairmen they will drive forward a new co-ordinated regional approach to economic renewal. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The new RDAs will have an important role in regenerating the regional economies of England and I know that East Lancashire will be well served by the new members."

Note to Editors: North West RDA membership:

Chairman - Lord Thomas of Macclesfield, 61, has had a successful career in banking culminating in nine years (1988 - 1997) as Managing Director of the Co-Operative Bank and seven years (1988 - 1995) as president of the International Co-Operative Banking Association.
Board Members Maggie Chadwick, 52, is the Chief Executive of Furness College, Barrow, and a member of the North West Chamber and Regional Committee of the Further Education Funding Council.
Mike Doyle, 59, was elected a Labour councillor in 1978 and is the Leader of St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council. He has held various positions in the Labour Party and is currently Chairman of his local Labour Party. John Dunning, 64, is the Director of Westmoreland Motorway Services, Chairman of Business Link (Eden and South Lakeland), a Board member Enterprise Cumbria, a member of the general Council of the Cumbria Tourist Board and House of Lords Rural Group.
Felicity Goodey, 49, is a director of Precise Communcations, a media and communications Group. The first woman industrial corespondent in broadcasting, she has been a senior BBC correspondent and presenter at national and regional level for more than 25 years.
Clive Jeanes, 65, is the Chairman of Wigan Borough Partnership and Chairman of the North West TEC. He is a member - and past Chairman - of the CBI North West Regional Council.
Richard Leese, 48, is the Labour Leader of Manchester City Council. He is also a Director of Manchester Airport, Manchester Ship Canal Company, a member of the Policy Committee of the North West Regional Association and is the Independent Chair of the Board of Moss Side and Hulme Economic Agency.
Alan Manning, 47, is the North West Regional Secretary for the Trade Unions Congress. He has national responsibility within the TUC for development of European Structural Fund Policy, and is also involved in regional programmes.
Dennis Mendoros, 44, is the Managing Director of Euravia Engineering and Chair of the Consortium of Lancashire Aerospace which represents 130 Aerospace and Defence contractors in the North West. He is the Chair of Pendle Partnership Ltd and a member of the Bank of England NW Economic panel. He has worked closely with the Rural Development Commission on behalf of residents and employers in the Lancashire Rural development area. No political activity or Ministerial public appointments.
Kath Reade, 50, is a Labour Councillor with a professional background as a youth and community worker and lecturer in social policy. She was the Leader of Burnley Borough Council from 1994 to 1998 when she chaired Burnley Regeneration Forum, administering a program of over £160m of Single Regeneration Budget, European and other funding. She has served on the Boards of East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council and Burnley college. She is a director of Burnley NHS Trust and is National Chair of the LGA Community Safety Panel and a member of the Home Office Ministerial Advisory Group of Retail Crime. She is on the Board of the newly formed Employer's Organisation which oversees national pay and conditions for local government. No Ministerial public appointments.
Dr Fred Ridley, 60, is the Liberal Democrat Leader of Stockport MBC. He is also a Director of Manchester Airport and Chair of Stockport Partnership for Urban Regeneration.
Judy Robinson, 47, is the Chair of the networking organisation Voluntary Sector North West.
James Ross, 60, is the Chair of the Littlewoods Organisation.

For Immediate Release. No 349/98 Wednesday16 December 1998

"BOUNCING BACK FROM BANKRUPTCY" HAS DANGERS SAYS PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today cautioned against the lionising of "risk takers" by changing the bankruptcy laws to allow the bankrupt "to bounce back into business".
In the Commons this afternoon, the MP quizzed DTI Secretary, Peter Mandelson, as to how the bankruptcy laws were to be changed in a way that would prevent rouges, crooks and others - who may have spent a business career conning others - simply picking up where they left off.
The Pendle MP said: "The Minister told me the changes would not help those made bankrupt as a result of dishonest conduct but only those who had honestly tried and failed. That is encouraging but I wait to see the small print of the proposal."
The MP continued: "In the past I have had a number of run ins with dishonest business people who have set up businesses and fled from their debts - often owing thousands of pounds to unsuspecting people who traded with them in good faith."
The exchange took place during the Commons Statement on the new Competitiveness White Paper - *Our Competitive Future*.

For Immediate Release. No 350/98 Wed 16 December 1998

MP TO MEET PRIME MINISTER OF AZAD KASHMIR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Mr Sultan Mahmood Chaudry, at a rally in the House of Commons tomorrow, Thursday.
Speaking before the meting, the MP said: "We have to keep Kashmir on the front page of our newspapers and not let it fade from view - the issue is too important for many of my constituents in Pendle as elsewhere. This is a valuable opportunity for MPs to quiz Mahmood Chaudry on the latest developments in Kashmir."
Last month, Foreign Office Minister, Derek Fatchett, told a delegation from Pendle, led by the local MP, that the Government remained committed to finding a solution to the crisis in Kashmir.
At the meeting the MP urged the Minister to consider publishing a six monthly report detailing progress towards a settlement of the conflict.
The MP is a member of the All Party Kashmir Group.

For Immediate Release. No 351/98 Wednesday 16 December 1998

MP CALLS FOR ACTION TO STAMP OUT CHILD LABOUR

International Development Secretary, Clare Short, today told Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, that the Government was backing moves to tackle child labour.

The Pendle MP has been pressing for urgent action to outlaw the practice. "All over the world, childhood is a misery for millions. We must speak up for those without a voice of their own."
The Minister told the MP: "We are supporting the International Labour Organisation's work aimed at producing a new International Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour which we hope will be agreed by all members of the ILO at the international Labour Conference in June 1999. This will cover forms of labour which enslave, corrupt, maim and kill children and young people under the age of 18."
She added: "We are also working with developing country governments and international organisations to help tackle the problem in practical ways because in many countries, despite laws against child labour, children from very poor families, often female headed, work as a result of extreme poverty. Programmes are needed to enable their parents to work for a better income and to provide schooling for children."

For Immediate Release. No 351/98 Thursday 31 December 1998

HONOUR FOR PPWA CHIEF

Dr Mohammed Ikram Malik, the Chairman of the Pendle Pakistan Welfare Association, has been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List, announced today, for services to community relations in Pendle and Burnley.
Welcoming the news, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Dr Malik has made a tremendous contribution over the years. He has fostered understanding within our local community in Pendle and he has a real talent for bringing people together and getting the best out of them."
The MP added: "This national recognition of his work here in East Lancashire is richly deserved."
"Everyone will be absolutely delighted."

For Immediate Release. No 360/98 Friday18 December 1998

UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES IN PENDLE SHOW SLIGHT RISE

The number of people in Pendle out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance last month stood at 1318 - a workforce rate of 3.5%, a slight rise on October's figure. 1010 men were unemployed and 308 women. There were 242 unfilled vacancies at the Job Centre in Nelson and 171 at Colne.
Nationally the trend in unemployment is encouraging. Employment Minister Andrew Smith said: "The figures refute the worst fears of those predicting a large jump in unemployment. The number of those in work has risen to 27.2 million, the highest level ever recorded. The small rise in unemployment highlights the need to get the right people with the right skills into the job vacanices available. This is a challenge for both employers recruiting and the Employment Service meeting the demand."
The local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "In Pendle we have had alot of bad news recently as local firms announce that they are closing or shedding jobs. These difficulties are likely to push the unemployment figure up over the coming months. However we have also had good news from other sectors such as aerospace which are doing well. The Government is already taking action to build a stable economy

capable of sustained and steady growth so that individuals, families and businesses are able to plan ahead with confidence."

For Immediate Release. No 370/98 Wednesday 23 December 1998

PENDLE MP KICKS OFF HIS CAMPAIGN AT CHRISTMAS RALLY ON 27th DECEMBER 1998.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining other Labour MP's and walkers from across the region at a rally to mark the start of his campaign to introduce the 'Freedom to Roam' Bill.
The rally, on the edge of the forbidden Midhope Moors in the Peak District, will also commemorate the 50th anniversary of an important countryside law, plugging its one gap by giving legal access to open, uncultivated countryside.
Gordon Prentice said: "Before the last election Labour promised to change the law and give the people freedom to roam responsibly over open country. In the light of that promise, I am using the opportunity given by my winning a high place in the private members' ballot to introduce a Bill that will give people the right to wander over mountain, moor, heath, down and common land, provided they do no harm."
The Ramblers' Association access chief, Kate Ashbrook, said: "Half a century ago a Labour government gave us secure public paths, national parks, national nature reserves and long-distance trails like the Pennine Way. We believe now that a new Labour government will give us access in the wild places where our passing will do no harm."

Note to the editor: Gordon Prentice will be presenting the Bill to the House of Commons on Wednesday 13 January 1999 and expects the second reading debate to take place on Friday 26th march 1999.

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 01/99 Monday 4 January 1999

NEW YEAR PAY BOOST FOR PENDLE'S LOW PAID

The introduction of the National Minimum Wage of £3.60 an hour in April 1999 will have a huge impact in Pendle says local MP, Gordon Prentice. He says over 8% of Pendle people in full time work and 27% in part time work will benefit from the pay boost. "For the first time in Britain the National Minimum Wage will provide all workers with a floor below which their wages will not fall."

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "Poverty pay has blighted this area for years. Wages are so low in East Lancashire that the new minimum wage, set at a modest level of £3.60, will make an enormous difference to thousands of people. The minimum wage will end the practise of scrooge employers being indirectly subsidised by taxpayers through the tax system. Family credit for example goes to people in work but on a very low wage."

The MP added: All successful businesses, large and small, have one thing in common - they recognise that the most important asset they have is the people that work for them. That also means paying them a decent wage. Unfortunately some employers think that the only way to compete is in terms of cutting costs. They pay their workers low wages and expect them to work long hours in order to earn enough money to live on. The result is a demotivated workforce, absenteeism, a high turnover of staff and staff shortages. Their products can be shoddy and their service poor. There is no future in that."

Note to Editors: The National Minimum Wage along with the introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit will ensure families on benefit do not lose out. For example, a one earner couple with two children can expect an
effective wage of more than £7.00 per hour.

More follows

PAY BOOST FOR PENDLE'S LOW PAID

The Government announced on 18 June that the National Minimum Wage will be introduced at a rate of £3.60 per hour, with effect from April 1999. A development rate will apply for 18-21 year olds. There will also be a development rate of £3.20 available for six months for workers aged 22 years and over starting a new job with a new employer and receiving accredited training. 16-17 year olds will be exempt from the National Minimum Wage.

Some two million workers nationally will escape from poverty pay as a result of the minimum wage. These will include:

1.3 million women and 1.2 million part-time workers;
130,000 ethnic minority workers;
80,000 homeworkers;
200,000 young people;
200,000 lone parents.

Note 2 to Editors: % of employees in 1997 earning under £3; £3.50 and £4.00 per hour:

		£3	£3.50	£4.00
Pendle	Full Time	1.5%	8.1%	14%
	Part Time	11.1%	27.8%	30.6%
Lancashire				
	Full Time	1.6%	5.7%	11.00%
	Part Time	7.5%	23.2%	37.3%

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 02/99 Monday 4 January 1999

DON'T GIVE THE EURO A POUNDING says MP

Local MP Gordon Prentice says the Euro, the new European single currency which is trading for the first time today, will have an enormous impact on the UK - whether we are in or out.

Speaking in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "It is in all our interests for the Euro to be a success. There are some people who are determined to give the Euro a pounding - even if it brings stability and prosperity - regardless of the consequences to the UK. The British Government's position is crystal clear. We would consider joining the Euro if it is in the UK's economic interests and no decision would be made without going through the "triple lock" procedure - a recommendation from the Cabinet, a majority vote in Parliament and, finally, the consent of the people in a referendum. The Conservatives position of staying out for ten years come what may is simply ludicrous."

Last July, the Pendle MP predicted a move by many homebuyers into "Euro mortgages" when the new currency gets off the ground. He said many banks and other lenders would start offering mortgages not only in sterling but in the new Euro - tempting borrowers with low interest repayments on Euro mortgages. At the time the Minister said the impact in the UK would be minimal.

Note to Editors: The financial markets indicate that it will be significantly cheaper to borrow money denominated in euros than in sterling. For a UK family taking out a mortgage, one denominated in euros may have a lower rate of interest attached to it. However, the repayments will be denominated in euros and be paid out in sterling. If sterling declines in value against the Euro then this will increase the cost of the repayments.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 3/99 Monday 4 January 1999

MP CLAIMS END IN SIGHT FOR JUNK FAXES AND UNWANTED PHONE CALLS

Consumers are to get greater protection against unwanted direct marketing "junk" faxes and phone calls in May this year says local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP - who, ironically, is responsible for sending out many hundreds of press releases by fax every year - has been a long time campaigner against junk faxes.

The MP said: “The ban on sending unwanted "junk" faxes to individuals will be in force in a few months - and not before time. People will also be able to "opt out" of receiving unwanted direct marketing phone calls by registering their name with a centralised list, and companies will be able to sign up to a similar scheme to avoid receiving "junk" faxes. Marketers will also be required to offer a contact address or freephone number so that people can contact them to ask to be removed from their databases.”

Industry Minister, Barbara Roche added: "Being disturbed at home by an unwanted phone call from someone trying to sell you a product you don't want is for many an irritating invasion of privacy. It's even more frustrating for people who have a fax at home who receive unwanted junk faxes that not only use up their fax paper, but can also disturb them at night.

"Small companies, in particular, are fed up having their fax machines clogged by unwanted advertising and "joke" faxes.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 3/99 Monday 4 January 1999

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News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 05/99 Monday 11 January 1999

MP DATE

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 07/99 Monday 11 January 1999

PENDLE MP SAYS GOVERNMENT WILL DELIVER IN 1999

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has published a check list of policies which are to be introduced this year. On his return to Westminster after the Christmas recess the MP conceded that the news agenda over the New Year period had been dominated by the news of the resignations of Peter Mandelson, Geoffrey Robinson and spin doctor, Charlie Wheelan.

The MP said: "This media fixation about the resignation of the DTI Secretary, Peter Mandelson is understandable given the relationship he had with journalists, but it really is time to move the agenda on. Mandelson is gone. The Government is still here, firing on all cylinders and delivering on a whole range of policies this year."

The MP continued: "The National Minimum Wage will be introduced in April, benefiting nearly 2 million people, two thirds of them women. The impact here in Pendle will be enormous. We will introduce the new Working Families Tax Credit in October, which together with the Minimum Wage, will guarantee low-paid families with a full- time worker a minimum income of £190 a week with no tax to pay on incomes below £220."

"From April, Child Benefit will be raised for the eldest child by £2.95. There will be an equivalent increase for poorer families with an increase to the Family Premium in Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance."

"To help make work pay, in April we will cut tax for all employees who pay National Insurance Contributions (NICs) - a gain of over £65 a year. Employers' National Insurance Contributions will be

more follows

1999 IS THE YEAR WHEN GOVERNMENT WILL DELIVER

cut for the vast majority of lower- and middle-income employees.

"From April we will be investing an extra £40 billion in schools and hospitals over the next three years, together with an extra £1.7 billion to modernise public transport; and extra investment in a new crime reduction strategy."

"From April we will extend the New Deal for the over 25s to 90,000 long-term unemployed, including everyone who has been unemployed for more than 18 months in Northern Ireland - some 30,000 people. And we will extend the New Deals for the young and long-term unemployed to partners of the unemployed."

"From April charges for eye tests for all pensioners will be abolished, there will be a fairer deal for transport, and all pensioners will have a minimum income guarantee of £75 a week for single pensioners and £116 a week for pensioner couples."

"From April, we will cut business tax rates to their lowest ever level - the standard rate of corporation tax is 30 per cent and the small business rate is 20 per cent."

The MP added: "These are things that will have a real impact on real people. It is the Labour Government making a real difference."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 08/99 Monday 11 January 1999

MP BACKS NEW BID FOR EXTRA SPACE AT SALTERFORTH PRIMARY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new bid by Salterforth County Primary School for extra accommodation. The school, he says, is bulging at the seams.

His comments follow a visit to the school last Friday (8 January) when he was given an audio-visual presentation led by the Chair of Governors, Peter King, and the Head, John Kelly.

In a letter today to the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, the Pendle MP writes: "As you will know, Salterforth County Primary School was inspected by OFSTED in October last year and received a very positive report. This reinforces my impressions of the school, which is well run and managed and acts as a focus for the local community. Unfortunately, there is the most dreadful overcrowding and this was specifically picked up by the Inspectors in their Report."

The MP went on: "Because the children are literally on top of each other, it is very difficult to do creative work and to keep the children concentrating on the task at hand.

Children are crammed into tiny class rooms and have to stream past other children at work in the main hall which doubles as another classroom, in order to get to the toilet."

Speaking from Westminster today, the MP said: "The Government has made New Deal money available for schools and I hope some of this can find its way to Salterforth - in addition to the new heating system which has just been installed. The parents have already raised the magnificent sum of £17,000 towards the cost of the new accommodation that is so desperately needed."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 09/99 Monday 11 January 1999

MP URGES MINISTER TO BACK THE RIGHT TO ROAM

A meeting today (Monday) between Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, and Countryside Minister, Michael Meacher, could pave the way for Government support for the Labour backbencher's Bill to guarantee the right to roam across open countryside.

Prentice - who came fifth in the annual ballot for Private Members' Bills - says the voluntary approach in which the Government simply urges landowners to open up their land to the public has failed in the past and there is no indication it will work now.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I am not interested in a few extra miles of footpaths, offered up as a concession. There are 3.5 million acres of open countryside out there which are off limits, out of bounds and that has got to change."

The MP added: "The Government's consultation on extending access to the open countryside in England and Wales ended on 5 June last year - over seven months ago. I believe it is time for the Government to come off the fence and tell us in detail what it proposes to do. I want it to back my Bill and, if not, to spell out precisely why not. I don't want the Government to remain studiously neutral as it did with the Foster Bill on foxhunting. That approach simply won't wash."

Note to the editor: Gordon Prentice will be presenting the Bill to the House of Commons on Wednesday 13 January 1999 and expects the second reading debate to take place on Friday 26th March 1999.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 10/99 Tuesday 12 January 1999

WINTER PRESSURES BLAST THE NHS

Icy weather has put additional pressures on the NHS admits Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, but the Government is determined to turn things round.

The MP was speaking at Westminster after raising the issue with Health Secretary, Frank Dobson.

In a letter to the Pendle MP, Dobson says: "Every winter is a time of pressure for the NHS. This winter, the pressures of flu and respiratory disease have been particularly demanding, affecting both patients, the public and NHS staff. But in most parts of the country most of the time, the NHS has been able to cope, thanks to a massive amount of hard work by the staff, backed up by £2O9m in England of targeted money for winter pressures."

"Part of the reason for the pressure on the Health Service is difficulties in recruiting trained nurses. It takes three years to train a nurse, so the current shortages can be traced back to the cuts that the Tories made in their last years of office in the numbers of nurses going into training."

"This year, around 15,500 nurses will start training - the highest figure for six years. If the Tories had matched this number of entrants to training in their last five years, there could be an extra 14,000 nurses available to work on the wards now."

The Pendle MP added: "We are putting millions of new money into the NHS - locally and nationally. However, most people realise you cannot turn things round over night."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 11/99 Wednesday 13 January 1999

MP HAILS BAN ON ANTIBIOTIC GROWTH PROMOTERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the Government's ban on the use of antibiotic growth promoters in farm animals.

Last month, the MP again urged Ministers to act on what he said was a health threat to humans. Prentice has waged a long campaign against the practice of feeding farm animals antibiotics simply as a way of putting on weight. He says some antibiotic compounds that are used in animals come from the same family as ones used in humans. "Some scientists believe antibiotic resistance could develop in farm animals and this resistance could transfer to humans with drastic consequences."

Agriculture Minister, Jeff Rooker, yesterday told the Pendle MP that the ban, which comes into force in five months time, is designed to reduce the risk of the build up of microbial resistance to antibiotics in animals and man. The Minister said: "It was possible that the abrupt introduction of the ban would adversely affect animal health and welfare, leading to an unnecessary increase in the use of therapeutic antibiotics. The ban will not therefore come into effect until 1 July 1999, giving livestock producers time to adapt to the loss of the four growth promoters.

Rooker continued: "The proposal, as agreed, is in line with advice the Government has received that the use of antibiotics which may impair the efficacy of prescribed therapeutic antibiotics used in human medicine through the development of resistant strains of organisms should be phased out."

Prentice added: "This is good news for the animals and for us."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 12/99 Thursday 14 January 1999

MP WANTS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the latest review of the National Air Quality Strategy, published by the Government yesterday.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government is pressing ahead with even tough targets for cutting air pollution. There is nothing more vital to our health and well-being than the air we breathe."

The MP added: "The incidence of asthma has been rising over the years and too many people, especially youngsters, are gasping for breath. It is in everybody's interests for the air to be cleaned up."

Note to Editors: The Department of Health's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants published a report The Quantification of the Effects of Air Pollution on Health in the United Kingdom in January 1998. The report estimated that, in 1997, 12,000 - 24,000 deaths of vulnerable people were brought forward by air pollution and 14,000-24,000 hospital admissions and re admissions of vulnerable people were associated with air pollution in the UK.

An information pack on air pollution and health is available free of charge from the Department of Health Publications Centre, POBox 410, Wetherby, LS23 7LN (Fax: 01937 845381).

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 13/99 Tuesday 19 January 1999

AITKEN GUILTY PLEA CLOSES A CHAPTER SAYS MP

The decision of the former Conservative Cabinet Minister, Jonathan Aitken, to plead guilty in the Old Bailey today to charges of perjury closes the final chapter in a long running saga of deception says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

For over two years, the Pendle MP pressed the authorities to get to the bottom of the Aitken affair. In July 1997 the MP quizzed Attorney General, John Morris, in the Commons asking how it was possible for a team of Guardian journalists to research,

write and publish ***The Liar*** a book on the collapsed libel action while nothing had emerged from Scotland Yard - 6 months after the case abruptly ended.

Speaking from Westminster following Aitken's guilty plea, the Pendle MP said: "Aitken resigned from the Conservative Cabinet to fight allegations of sleaze with *"the simple sword of truth and the trusty shield of British fair play"*. On his own admission he lied. His perjury was serious because, as sure as night follows day, had he been successful he would have won exemplary damages having resigned a Cabinet place to bring the action for libel."

The MP added: "When he started his libel action and unsheathed his simple sword of truth, Aitken gambled he would not be found out. It was a stroke of luck that the truth emerged."

Note to Editors: Aitken will be sentenced later. Perjury carries a maximum prison sentence of 7 years. Perverting the course of justice is a common law offence and the courts are free to impose whatever penalty they consider appropriate.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 14/99 Tuesday 19 January 1999

TESTING TIMES

A new practical driving test is to come into operation on 4 May says the Driving Standards Agency and Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is right behind the changes.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Driving conditions are very different now compared with even ten years ago and it is right that learners should be tested on what they will face when they get behind the wheel." The changes will include longer test routes, taking candidates onto more single and dual carriageway roads outside 30 mph limits, where possible.

The DSA wants to see more flexible arrangements for testing the standard reversing manoeuvres, and improved written feedback after the test. Examiners will also fail candidates for more than 15 minor driving faults.

The MP added: "We can all have the odd driving mishap but some people have a complete personality change when they get behind the wheel. Some drivers are a real menace to others."

Notes to editors: Nationally in 1997-8 approximately 1.2 million tests for car drivers, over 56,511 tests for lorry and bus drivers and over 84,629
motorcycle rider tests were carried out. About 1400 examiners carried out the car and motorcycle tests from 335 permanent test centres across Britain. In the same period, 1.25 million theory tests were conducted at 157 centres.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 15/99 Friday 15 January 1999

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people in Pendle out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance last month stood at 1462 - a workforce rate of 3.9% up from 1318 (3.5%) in November. This is below the national average currently 4.6%.

1,135 men were unemployed and 327 women. There were 180 unfilled vacancies at the Job Centre in Nelson and 165 at Colne.

Nationally, unemployment continues to fall. The claimant count was down 14,000 in December to 1.31 million (4.6%), the lowest level since June 1980. The number of people in work has hit a new record with a further increase to 27.3 million.

Gordon Prentice MP said: "Unemployment in Pendle peaked at a level of 3355 in August 1992 and has been falling steadily since.
The Pendle area has always been heavily dependent on manufacturing industry which we all know is going through a difficult time at the moment. However the government's welfare-to-work strategy is beginning to have an effect and I am confident it will help unemployed people locally as well as it has nationally."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 16/99 Wednesday 20 January 1999

IT'S THE END OF THE PEERS SHOW says PRENTICE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today hailed the historic announcement that the right of hereditary peers to sit in Parliament is to be abolished.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The House of Lords is an out-dated and unrepresentative institution that must be reformed. We can no longer tolerate a situation that gives 600 families the right to decide laws for every other family in the country. Hereditary peers do not represent modern Britain. Only 16 of the 600 are women and only 2 are from ethnic minorities. 45% went to Eton."

"And no matter how the general public vote in a general election it does not change the fact that, because of the hereditary peers, the Tories will always be in power in the House of Lords. Their huge Lords majority over the Government gives them the power to frustrate Labour's proposals for better hospitals, better schools and a better welfare system whenever they want. Today is the end of the road for the hereditary peers in the Lords."

"We will set up a Royal Commission that will come up with proposals for a new second chamber by the end of the year.
In eighteen years the Tories did nothing to address the issue. Instead they used the hereditaries to push through unpopular legislation such as the poll tax and the rail privatisation. In contrast, Labour will ensure that we have a modern Parliament, based on merit and not birth or privilege, that will mean better government. I support what the Government is doing to make sure that this happens. Lords reform is about making sure that power passes from the old establishment to the people."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 17/99 Thursday 21 January 1999

GOVERNMENT WILL DELIVER ON MIDWIVES says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today pledged the Government would be fair with the midwives. The MP has been approached by local midwives anxious to see the Government tackle the problems it inherited.

Earlier this week, Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, said: "The government wants to see a fair pay rise for nurses, midwives and Professions Allied to Medicine which is affordable and which will support modernisation of the health service. Our ability to make progress at the rate we would like on improving recruitment and working conditions is dependent on affordable pay awards. Similarly, our ability to make the pay system fairer and to end staging rely on pay settlements being consistent with the financial position of the health service. Fair pay helps to support the government's NHS modernisation programme by helping to recruit, retain and motivate staff who deliver patient care."

The Pendle MP added: "In eighteen months this government has done more for nurses and midwives than the previous government did in eighteen years - but clearly more needs to be done. Nursing and midwifery remains a secure form of employment offering good and improving prospects for career progression as their role is enhanced in line with the government's objectives. Reserved places for nurses and midwives on Primary Care Groups, prescribing by nurses and midwives, greater control over childbirth services by midwives, and the prospect of consultant posts all offer a more satisfying career at the heart of the new NHS."

Note to Editors: In September, the government unveiled a package of measures to tackle staff shortages, including a £50 million cash injection,
which came into effect immediately and which will contribute to

more follows

increasing the overall number of nurses and midwives by up to 15,000 over the next three years. The plan consists of:

an extra 6000 student places over the next three years;

a total of £800 million (£42.6m for midwifery) invested in training in 1998/9, with an extra £60 million in 1999/2000;

an expansion of part-time training places to help make it easier to train for people with other commitments such as family or caring responsibilities;

giving nursing and midwifery students financially favourable NHS bursaries rather than loans (the government has increased the bursary by 2.75%), the first increase in three years;

access to training and financial support for existing NHS staff to become qualified nurses and midwives - 200 staff this year and 1,000 in the following three years;

funding over the next three years to retrain around 2,700 enrolled nurses to upgrade their qualifications;

an allocation of £4 million specifically for return to practice schemes;

the creation of consultant posts which will help to provide an alternative career path within clinical settings for senior and experienced nurses and midwives who might otherwise enter management.

For Immediate Release. No 18/99 Monday 25 January 1999

MP BACKS MOVE TO SET NEW STANDARDS FOR CARE HOMES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the first step towards developing national standards that will apply to the thousands of residential care and nursing homes for elderly people.

The Centre for Policy on Ageing (CPA), commissioned last February by the Department of Health to draw up a draft set of standards for this care sector, have delivered their final report and recommendations. These will now be carefully considered before going out to consultation later this year. The draft standards cover issues such as quality of care, staffing, diet and nutrition, personal and health care and accommodation.

The Minister, John Hutton, said: "This is an important report that will form the basis of a full and open consultation exercise. "We have made clear our determination to raise standards of care for elderly people and this report marks a significant stage in the development of new national standards. The present system has rightly been criticised as failing to set clear guidance about what we expect of registered care and nursing homes, leading to inconsistency of standards across the country."

The Pendle MP added: "Elderly people in residential care deserve top class treatment wherever they are - in private or local authority care. I want to see the sharp variations in standards of care ironed out."

For Immediate Release. No 19/99 Monday 25 January 1999

GENE FOODS "A RECIPE FOR DISASTER"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be swallowing hard tomorrow morning when he joins some of Britain's best known food writers who have signed a statement against the introduction of genetically modified food into our food chain.

Speaking before the breakfast event, the MP said: "Genetically modified foods could be a recipe for disaster. People have the right to know what they are eating."

The MP added: "I don't want to buy a straight banana or whatever else comes out of the laboratory. We should be promoting the benefits - to the land and to our health - of organic farming. That's the real way forward."

For Immediate Release. No 20/99 Monday 25 January 1999

PENDLE MP PRAYING FOR CHURCH INVESTMENTS IN NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, quizzed Church Commissioner Stuart Bell in the Commons this afternoon on the Church of England's property investments. The MP has taken a close interest in Church investments following the disastrous mistakes of the eighties and early 90s when choice items in the Church's property portfolio were sold for a song.

The MP asked Bell what steps were taken to ensure that freeholds were never sold for less than the best available price.

The MP continued: "My question is prompted by reading Jimmy Hill's autobiography over Christmas when I recalled that the freehold of Fulham Football Club has been sold in the eighties for £900,000 by the Church Commissioners to Ernie Clay, the then chairman of the Club, who promptly sold it on for about £6m. He is now living in Portugal."

The MP continued: "I appreciate that, as a result of these experiences, there has been a big shift in recent years from property into equities and I hope the Church's policy is to invest in UK equities - especially those companies providing employment in deprived urban areas such as North East Lancashire."

Stuart Bell acknowledged the point. Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "There's treasure on earth and I hope some of it will be invested in Pendle."

For Immediate Release. No 21/99 Monday 25 January 1999

for publication:

IT'S TIME FOR THE RIGHT TO ROAM

The right to roam across open countryside is a modest demand whose time has come. Its opponents paint it as a draconian measure, challenging ancient property rights and almost akin to expropriation! Not so.

My Bill will guarantee a legally enforceable right of access on foot to uncultivated open country with a brace of safeguards to protect sensitive habitats. There are many very good reasons why people should not walk on land - but ownership is not one of them. Ownership, of itself, is not a sufficient reason to keep open country off limits to the public.

Legislation is needed because the voluntary approach promoted so energetically by the Country Landowners Association simply will not work. This was explicitly recognised by the Labour Party before the 1997 General Election when we made clear and unambiguous commitments to legislate. It follows that I don't want my own government to be neutral on this issue but to row in behind my Bill and give it active support.

My Bill calls for 'area access' and the promise of a few more miles of footpaths is not enough. Nor is the CLA's bizarre suggestion of "permanent visual access" to

open country. People want to walk the hills and not simply gaze at them! There are 3.5 million acres of open countryside out there which are out of bounds and that has got to change.

The Bill covers land which is wholly or predominantly mountain, moor, heath or down or which is common land; and creates a right to enter on and to remain on open country. Plainly, it is not about invading people's privacy as if we were creating a new right to trample through people's gardens.

Open country would be defined and mapped by a surveying

more follows

authority and the certified open country map would be conclusive evidence that land shown on it is open country. Relying on text alone would create enormous practical problems.

The Bill includes provisions for certain land to be excepted from the general definition such as parks and gardens and, of course, land covered by buildings. Clearly, land uses change from time to time and the Bill makes provision for any person to apply at any time for land to be taken off the map. This will be a "declaration of non-conformity". Similarly, land can be added to the map by a "declaration of conformity." The Bill also allows for the right to roam to be suspended if, for example, there is a risk of fire or if historic or natural things on the land need to be protected.

The Bill creates a series of offences. Obstructing the public or erecting deterrent signs will be an offence. Occupiers of land will have no greater liability than under existing law.

The cross compliance clauses are very important. These will ensure that no public money goes into the pockets of landowners who block up rights of way and any grants will have to be paid back if footpaths become obstructed. And those who get conditional exemption from paying inheritance tax because they allow public access to land will have to publicise that access widely.

This whole issue is, for Labour, unfinished business. It has an enormous resonance within the party and beyond, A year ago, the Countryside Alliance came to London and exercised their right to roam - on Hyde Park. It is time to return the compliment and give the people the right to roam on open country.

Gordon Prentice is Labour MP
for Pendle

Note to Editors: The MP presented his Bill to the Commons earlier this month and comes up for the second reading debate on Friday 26 March

For Immediate Release. No 22/99 Tuesday 26 January 1999

MP CALLS FOR REGISTER OF INTERESTS FOR JUDGES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for a statutory register of interests for judges to ensure the trials they preside over are not tainted with suggestions of bias on the bench.

At questions in the Commons this afternoon to the Lord Chancellor's Department, Prentice asked the Minister of State, Geoff Hoon, if he shared his incredulity that no fewer than 64 members of the judiciary had chosen not to disclose whether or not they were freemasons. The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice recently specifically asked judges to disclose this information voluntarily.

Geoff Hoon told the Pendle MP the Government had no plans to bring in a statutory register.

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "Clearly, all judges should disclose any interests they may have which could be seen as influencing their judgement - as with Lord Hoffman in the Pinochet case - but the problem goes wider than this."

The MP added: "Councillors have to register their interests. MPs must do so and judges too should be open and honest about their interests. I am disappointed with the Government's line but these are early days and the issue is not going to go away."

For Immediate Release. No 23/99 Wednesday 27 January 1999

PET HATES

Many of Pendle's pet owners are pressing for the reform of the quarantine laws in which animals are separated from their closest human friends for many months following an overseas trip, says local MP, Gordon Prentice. This is done to prevent rabies in the UK.

The MP is backing a proposal to give passports to pets confirming that they have a clean bill of health. The MP said: "I've had lots of postcards from local members of the organisation "Passports for Pets" expressing concern that reform of quarantine, and the implementation of a new system, may take up to three years."

The MP continued: "The government is sympathetic to change along the lines recommended by the Advisory Group on Quarantine, and invited comments from members of the public and interested organisations. The consultation period ended on 31 December 1998, and the responses to the consultation exercise are currently being examined."

The Advisory Group recommended that changes to the present system of quarantine should not be introduced until an administrative and operational infrastructure was in place and thought that it might take three years to achieve this.

The MP added: "I know that Ministers are already looking closely at the legal, financial and practical aspects - including the timetable. Implementation of changes to the current quarantine rules will be carried out as fast as possible. Any new system must continue to protect us against rabies. The current quarantine rules will still apply until such time as the law is changed."

For Immediate Release. No 24/99 Wednesday 27 January 1999

INCOME BOOST FOR PENDLE'S LOW PAID FAMILIES

Labour's new approach to employment and tax and benefit policy is designed to promote employment opportunities for all, and getting the fundamentals right says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was speaking at Westminster following the Commons debate on the new Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and Disabled Person's Tax Credit (DPTC).

The MP said: "As a result of the WFTC, more than one million low paid families will be on average £17 a week better off. From October, the WFTC will guarantee low paid families with a full time worker a minimum income of £190 a week with no tax to pay on incomes below £220."

The MP continued: "And the DPTC will guarantee a minimum income £220 to the family of a disabled person moving from benefit to full-time work with no tax to pay on incomes below £274."

"Both WFTC and DPTC contain a new element, the childcare tax credit, to provide extra help with childcare costs. It will provide 70 per cent of childcare costs up to a maximum eligible spending of £100 a week for one child and £150 for two or more children."

Prentice added: "These changes will mean a real boost to the incomes of many families in Pendle."

For Immediate Release. No 25/99 Tuesday 26 January 1999

ORDER! ORDER!

Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP at Edge End High School, Hibson Road, Nelson on Friday 29 January 1999 at 1.30 pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting Edge End High School this Friday to listen to the young people of Year 9 as they debate the serious subject of the Euro. He will then be on hand to offer any advice or practical hints on their handling of the debate.

This activity is part of the Motorola Youth Parliament Competition in which schools make a short video of a mock parliamentary session - five minutes of a ministerial Question Time and a fifteen minute debate on a subject which is relevant to young people.

The Pendle MP said: "In my experience of visiting schools in the area I always find that the students have a refreshing way of looking at current issues. I shall be there to advise the Edge End group on the realism of their debate although we all expect higher standards at Edge End than we sometimes get at the Commons!"

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 26/99 Thursday 28 January 1999

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice has welcomed the publication of the draft Food Standards Agency Bill which, when carried into law, will ensure our food is safe to eat..

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The proposals are a welcome move towards the establishment of a powerful new body to protect people here in Pendle as elsewhere."

"Consumers and businesses will benefit from the increased public confidence in the food industry the new body will provide. We are dealing with an issue the previous Government failed to address in 18 years."

The Pendle MP added: "I have taken a close interest in food policy issues after the dreadful series of food catastrophes we had a few years ago. The words E Coli, salmonella and listeria have now unfortunately entered common English usage. In Pendle in December 1996 we had an outbreak of e coli which struck down a number of people though none to long lasting effect. It is as plain as a pikestaff that an independent agency is long overdue."

Note to Editors: The two consultation documents published are the draft Food Standards Bill and a document on the government's proposals to fund some of the costs of the Agency from a levy on food premises. The draft Bill was drawn up in the light of consultation on the Food Standards Agency White Paper, "A Force For Change", which was published in January 1998. The White Paper followed on from the James report on food safety which was published immediately after the general election in May 1997. The government intends to introduce legislation as soon as the Parliamentary timetable permits after the end of the consultation period (24 March 1999), if possible this will be during the current session of Parliament.

The Food Standards Agency is proposed as a UK body advising and reporting to Health Ministers and the devolved authorities, but working at arm's length from these legislative bodies. The Agency will be free to publish its

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advice to Ministers, which is an important guarantee of the independence of the body. The headquarters of the Agency will be in London, with executive branches in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and will be run by a Chairman and team of ten to fourteen independent appointed members representing a balance of interests and experience. The Agency will have approximately 500 headquarters staff, drawn from existing departments and new appointments, plus over 1500 in the Meat Hygiene Service, The Chief Executive will be appointed through open competition.

The main provisions of the Bill, published in draft form, establish the Food Standards Agency as a Crown body with the primary aim of protecting public health in relation to food. Responsibilities which are presently exercised by MAFF will be transferred to the Agency which will be accountable to the Secretary of State for Health. The functions of the Agency and its right to publish any advice,

including that given to Ministers, are established in the Bill along with a requirement for the Agency to take account of factors including risk, costs and benefits in the way it exercises its functions.

The consultation document on charging proposes a levy set at an annual flat rate fee of around £90 for food retail and catering premises, including restaurants, pubs and catering contractors. It is proposed that retail premises whose only food sales are wrapped confectionery, soft drinks, crisps and similar wrapped products will be exempt. The levy has been drawn up in a way that is administratively simple, transparent and fair and equates to less than £2 per premises each week.

The government believes that the modest nature of the flat rate levy will be acceptable to small businesses, who stand to gain from the improved consumer confidence the Agency will provide. The government will, however, undertake further discussion of these proposals with business representatives - including small businesses - during the consultation period. The levy is estimated to raise about £40 million a ear with the majority of the £270 million.

For Immediate Release. No 27/99 Thursday 28 January 1999

NEW RIGHTS AT WORK

Important new rights for people in work have been welcomed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The Employment Relations Bill will implement the Government's proposals for Fairness at Work - the subject of extensive and prolonged discussions between the TUC and the CBI.

The MP said: “The Bill reflects the changing patterns of work and family life in Britain today. It addresses the need to develop family-friendly employment practices.”

"I am delighted, for example, that women in Pendle with less than two years service will be entitled to an extra four weeks maternity leave as a result of these family friendly proposals."

Notes to editors: The key proposals in the Bill are:

Unfair dismissal can be claimed after one year rather than 2 years at present.

The top level of payments in cases of unfair dismissal has been raised fourfold, with employees able to claim up to £50,000.

Statutory union recognition will be granted where a majority and at least 40 per cent of those eligible vote for it. As promised in the White Paper the Government has set out how unions must demonstrate a reasonable level of support before a ballot takes place.

Where 50 per cent plus one of a bargaining unit are members of a trade union, the Bill allows for recognition to be automatic, although the Central Arbitration Committee will have the right to call a ballot if it is unclear that all of the trade union members want recognition or if good industrial relations require it.

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Where recognition is imposed via a legally binding procedure, there will be a duty to inform and consult a union about training.

It will be automatically unfair to dismiss those taking part in lawfully organised industrial action for eight weeks. Dismissal thereafter will be fair only if the employers has taken all reasonable procedural steps to try to resolve the dispute.

Blacklisting people as a consequence of trade union membership or activities will be prohibited. The loophole revealed by the Wilson and Palmer case will be closed, so that discrimination by omission on grounds of union membership or non-membership will be unlawful.

The Government will create a Partnership Fund to contribute to the training of managers and employee representatives in order to assist and develop partnerships at work.

Labour in Government is going ahead with all the White Paper proposals on family friendly policies. These include:

Extension of Maternity Leave to eighteen weeks.

Rights to extended maternity absence after one year's service instead of two as at present, and to parental leave after one year's service.

Rights for employees to return to their own jobs or if necessary suitable alternatives after parental leave.

Providing three months adoption leave.

Providing a right to reasonable time off for family emergencies.

Providing powers to implement the EU part-time work directive and ensure equal pay for part-time workers.

For Immediate Release. No 28/99 Tuesday 2 February 1999

PENDLE MP WELCOMES PAY BOOST FOR NURSES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news that nurses are to get a pay boost. Newly-qualified nurses get 12 per cent rise and 70,000 nurses get 8.2 per cent. More than 2 out of 3 nurses will earn more than £20,000.

Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, said: “"Today's announcement is the best pay award to nurses and PAMs (Professions Allied to Medicine) in real terms in the last ten years. And for the first time in five years, the award is being paid nationally in full, with no staging. That’s good news for the staff, good news for patients and good news for the NHS.”

The Pendle MP commented: “We all want nurses to get a fair deal.”

For Immediate Release. No 29/99 Tuesday 2 February 1999

MP STEPS INTO CONTROVERSY OVER APPOINTMENT OF NEW COUNTRYSIDE CHIEF

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today warned the Government that the appointment of Ewen Cameron, a former President of the Country Landowners Association who has blocked public footpaths on his land, to chair the new Countryside Agency would be unacceptable.

The MP has tabled a Commons motion which claims that Mr Cameron planted a potato crop across a public footpath on his land in 1996, contrary to the Rights of Way Act 1990. The motion asserts that he is firmly opposed to legislation giving freedom to roam on open country.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I am keeping my fingers crossed that this press report is wild speculation. It beggars belief that a Labour Government would even contemplate appointing someone with Mr Cameron's track record to such an important job."

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP's Commons motion reads: That this House expresses its grave concern at reports in the Financial Times of 30th January 1999 that Mr Ewen Cameron, a former President of the Country Landowners Association, has been interviewed twice for the post of chairperson of the New Countryside Agency which is to be created on 1st April; notes with dismay the assertion by the Financial Times that Mr Cameron personally lobbied the Prime Minster against wide-ranging right to roam legislation; recalls that Mr Cameron planted a potato crop across a public footpath on his land in 1996, contrary to the Rights of Way Act 1990; further notes that he is firmly opposed to legislation giving freedom to roam on open country to which the Countryside Commission, which will form part of the new agency, is committed; and believes the appointment of Mr Cameron would not command public confidence and should on no account be seriously considered by a Labour Government with the interests of the many at heart rather than the few.

For Immediate Release. No 30/99 Wednesday 3 February 1999

MP HAILS THE "END OF THE PEERS"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the historic vote in the Commons last night to end the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. The MP wants to see a small, directly elected, second chamber, complementing the Commons.

Speaking from Westminster after the vote, the MP said: "It is a great day for democracy. Who - except the Tories - wants to go into the 21st century with a mediaeval Parliament? 350 years ago King Charles I was executed and a Commonwealth proclaimed. The House of Lords was also abolished only to be re-established after the interregnum with the restoration of the monarchy and the accession of Charles II. So, we've been there and done it. We shouldn't be afraid of change."

The MP added: "I agree with the Government's two stage approach. Despite the protestations of the Conservatives, it was never practical politics to come forward with a complete package - which an unreformed Upper House could block using the votes of the hereditary peers."

"Legitimacy flows from election - not appointment or patronage or birth. In 1996 the third Lord Brocket was sentenced to 5 years in jail for trying to defraud his insurance company after claiming four of his classic cars had been stolen. His father the second

Lord Brocket was a well known fascist. His grandfather, the first Lord Brocket, bought the title from Lloyd George. To give the Lord Brockets of this world a say in determining how our laws are made is absurd."

For Immediate Release. No 31/99 Wednesday 3 February 1999

MP TO SPONSOR BILL TO DECRIMINALISE CANNABIS FOR MEDICINAL USE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to be one of the sponsors of a "ten minute rule" Bill to decriminalise cannabis for medicinal use which backbench Labour MP Paul Flynn is to introduce in the Commons on 24 February. The Bill is unlikely to become law but provides a valuable opportunity to give the issue an airing.

Flynn says his Bill follows the recommendation of the House of Lords report last year on cannabis which called for its medical use to be allowed. The Newport MP says natural cannabis should be allowed for the relief of chronic pain or to counteract the effects of chemotherapy.

The Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has repeatedly called for the Government to legalise cannabis when prescribed by doctors. The MP - a long standing campaigner for the medical use of the banned drug - says cannabis and its derivatives can help people control and manage the symptoms of conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis.

Last November, the prestigious House of Lords Science and Technology Committee called for cannabis to be returned to the medicine chest. It was banned by the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act. Before then it was often prescribed by doctors in tincture form.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Cannabis can help people with conditions which do not necessarily respond to conventional medicine. It will shortly be trialled to establish its clinical effectiveness."

For Immediate Release. No 32/99 Monday 8 February 1999

EAST LANCS MAKES BID FOR REGIONAL AID

A delegation from East Lancashire, led by local MPs Greg Pope and Gordon Prentice, today made a bid for cash to help the area transform itself into a new economic powerhouse.

The delegation which also included Steve Hoyle of Blackburn with Darwen Council, Cllr Tony Harrison from Burnley and Richard Hope from Silentnight, told Industry Minister, Michael Wills, that Regional Aid coming into the area would be money well spent.

Speaking after the meeting at the DTI HQ in Victoria Street, the Pendle MP said: "The Minister is clearly trying to squeeze a quart of cash into a pint pot. He doesn't have an easy job. But he was left in no doubt about the strength of our case which was put with frankness and vigour. We now wait to see."

Note to Editors: This is a summary of the case presented to Ministers today: On 30th July 1998 the Government announced a review of the Assisted Areas of Great Britain. The current Assisted Areas were designated in August 1993 with Blackburn and Darwen the only Assisted Area in East Lancashire. Assisted Areas are those areas of Great Britain where regional aid (RSA) may be granted under Community Law.

The East Lancashire case, representing the districts of Burnley, Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale, demonstrates the need for assistance by highlighting the social and economic problems of East Lancashire in five key areas:

Structural Decline: The real problems of the local economy: low pay; low business start up and survival rates; low Gross Value Added and low capital investment - conditions which have been prevalent for decades in East Lancashire - have been too often masked and ignored by giving undue emphasis to employment figures as the main criterion for Government assistance in the past. Average levels of GVA per head are less than 82% of the UK average and in addition the East Lancashire districts have seriously under-performed in terms of manufacturing investment over a long period (66% of the UK average) This crude

more follows

investment gap with the rest of the UK shows no sign of narrowing.

Gross Average Earnings (Low Pay): Whilst many jobs have been created and safeguarded over the last 15-20 years many have been of low quality - characterised by low levels of pay, skills and job security. We need to be able to attract higher paid jobs in replacement industries.

Business Registration and Survival Rates: Trends in business registrations and de-registrations provide a sensitive indicator of prevailing economic conditions. The low business survival rate has been exacerbated by a low rate of inward investment and these factors combined have resulted in a continued significant fall in East Lancashire's business stock, compared with the regional and national figures.

Unemployment The use of unemployment as a key indicator of economic performance does not fully reflect the structural and other problems facing the sub-region. Placing the emphasis solely on the quantity of jobs and unemployment per se is wholly inadequate as a measure of material well-being in East Lancashire. In particular it disregards the quality of employment and levels of remuneration. Of particular concern is the fact that the districts have a significantly higher proportion of their unemployed in the 16-14 years age group than the national average.

Local Deprivation. The Government's own Statistics show East Lancashire's problems through a wide range of social indicators. Important as these are, these data must be combined with the other indicators to show the continuing structural decline and the need for Government Assistance to help manufacturing industry and thereby the prosperity of the sub-region.

Conclusion: The main form of aid within Assisted Areas is Regional Selective Assistance, its primary purpose being to support investment projects in manufacturing. If the purpose of the present review is to target those areas most in need, East Lancashire, with its heavy dependence on manufacturing industry must surely rank amongst those of greatest need A number of areas may well be able to present better statistical cases than East Lancashire, particularly those which are suffering from high unemployment. However, it will be counter productive in terms of Regional Policy if Assisted Area status is granted to areas not in a position to take advantage of regional aid - ie with no significant manufacturing employment.

East Lancashire on the other hand, with 37% employment in manufacturing - one of the highest concentrations in the country - can make good use of such assistance. The vulnerability of the area's economy is demonstrated by the high level of closures and redundancies announced in recent months At times of national economic downturn, East Lancashire is always one of the first areas to be hit, and one of the last to recover. East Lancashire has a positive social, economic and political force to

drive forward the changes needed to overcome its significant problems. It needs Government assistance to bring these changes to fruition.

For Immediate Release. No 33/99 Tuesday 9 February 1999

RIGHT TO ROAM BILL: PRESS CONFERENCE

Gordon Prentice MP will be holding a press conference tomorrow (Wednesday, 10 February) at 12.30pm in Interview Room W1 (off Westminster Hall) to mark the publication of his Private Members' Bill guaranteeing a right to roam across open countryside in England and Wales.

The Bill is down for second reading on Friday 26 March. So far, over 140 Labour MPs have pledged their support on the day.

For Immediate Release. No 34/99 Wednesday 10 February 1999

MP DISMAYED AT NEWS OF BUOYANT UPHOLSTERY IN RECEIVERSHIP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has expressed dismay at the bombshell news today that the receivers had been called in to Nelson's Buoyant Upholstery.

Reports claim that 170 jobs are to go immediately and a further 280 are on hold while the receivers search for a possible buyer.

The Pendle MP said: "I shall be doing everything I can to save the company and the jobs. This is a terrible blow to the town."

The MP continued: "Unfortunately, the economy has been slowing down and high street sales have been depressed as people are holding on to their money. They are not making the "big ticket" purchases of furniture and the like - and they are not moving house in the numbers I'd like to see. If this were to pick up - as it generally does in the Spring - companies such as Buoyant would get a real shot in the arm."

"I am convinced the economy will start to sped up over the next 6 to eight months as the cuts in interest rates start to feed through and influence people's behaviour. Interest rates last June stood at 7.5%. Now they are 5.5% and this means lower mortgage repayments."

The MP added: "That said, the crisis at Buoyant is with us right now and I shall be speaking to the receivers to see what can be done. I am also in touch with Ministers.""

For Immediate Release. No 36/99 Tuesday 16 February 1999

IMMIGRATION RULES SHOULD BE “FIRM, FAST AND FAIR” SAYS MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has today welcomed the publication of the Government's Immigration and Asylum Bill which proposes a radical overhaul of Britain's immigration and asylum system, to make it fairer, faster and firmer.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "It's time we sorted things out. For too long genuine refugees have suffered while bogus refugees have worked the system to their advantage.”

The MP continued: "We want to be firm, fast and fair. The new Bill contains a new right to appeal for family visitors, will pilot a visitors' bond scheme, and provides for automatic bail hearings for all immigration detainees. In June 1997 we abolished the unfair and arbitrary primary purpose rule.”

"We have all heard about the numbers of people who have been entering the country illegally in the back of lorries. We must put a stop to this abuse - that is why I welcome the idea of a new £2,000 civil penalty for lorry drivers or others who help illegal immigrants get into this country. Airlines and ferry companies are already required to make these checks - it's only right that other transport operators do the same.”

"I also welcome the plans for a new system of support for asylum seekers ending cash benefit payments and replacing them with a system of accommodation and support in kind. We will honour our commitment to support refugees under international law but with rights come responsibilities and we will no longer let people take advantage of our system.”

more follows:
“FIRM, FAST AND FAIR”

Note to Editors: The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, wrote to the MP as follows: I am writing to you following the introduction of the Government's Immigration and Asylum Bill. The Bill is vital to deliver the strategy for a modern and effective immigration and asylum system set out in the White Paper, 'Fairer, Faster And Firmer - A Modern Approach to Immigration And Asylum', which we published last July.

A key element of the strategy outlined in the White Paper is the need to speed up the system of immigration and asylum appeals. There are currently too many avenues of appeal. The Bill will provide for a single, comprehensive appeal which will ensure that all factors in a case are considered fairly and quickly. Where an applicant's appeal fails, the aim is that their removal from the United Kingdom will swiftly follow by administrative removal, not deportation as now.

The Bill includes a number of safeguards to make the system fairer as well as faster. A new scheme for the regulation of immigration advisers is proposed to help weed out those who give poor advice and exploit their clients. The Bill contains additional protection for those detained under immigration legislation by extending the judicial element in the detention process. It also puts on a statutory footing the management and operation of immigration detention centres.

Many colleagues will be aware of the recent increase in asylum seekers coming to the United Kingdom. We are not alone in facing such increases. Many other European countries face similar or worse pressures. Relative to population size ten EU countries have faced a greater influx than do we.

We are determined to fulfil our obligations to genuine refugees, but there is no doubt that the asylum system is being abused by many who do not qualify for refugee status or to remain here on some other basis. Such claimants undermine public support for genuine refugees and increase delays in dealing with their claims. We have already taken a number of measures to strengthen controls, including the imposition of visa regimes where necessary, accelerating the posting of more Airline Liaison Officers abroad and undertaking targeted operations against the criminal gangs who organise illegal immigration. The Bill will deliver further improvements.

The new asylum support arrangements proposed in the Bill are designed to ensure that asylum seekers in genuine need are not left destitute, while acting as a disincentive to economic migrants. All asylum seekers (with the exception of unaccompanied children) will be removed from the main benefits system. A new national scheme, administered by the Home Office, will provide accommodation and support. Asylum seekers will have no choice about the accommodation they are offered, and support will generally be in kind rather than cash. Their will be a system for the review of decisions to refuse or withdraw support. The new scheme is aimed substantially to reduce the burden that has fallen heavily on certain local authorities, particularly in London and the South-East.

The Bill contains a number of measures to strengthen enforcement of the immigration law. There will be a new civil penalty to tackle the growing

more follows

problem of clandestine entry in lorries and other vehicles. The powers of immigration officers will be extended to enable them to undertake more enforcement activity without having to rely on the presence of police officers. The maximum term of imprisonment for use of deception is being increased from 6 months to 2 years. We are considering the scope for increased use of fingerprints and hope to bring forward amendments during the passage of the Bill.

The Bill honours the Government's manifesto commitment to introduce
a streamlined right of appeal for visitors who are refused an entry clearance to visit a family member in the United Kingdom. It will provide for greater flexibility in the way permission to enter the United Kingdom may be granted. This will help to speed the clearance of genuine passengers through the controls, while allowing resources to be targeted on attempts to evade the system,

The Immigration and Asylum Bill represents the most fundamental and wide -ranging reform of legislation on immigration and asylum or decades. The Government will propose that the Bill should be committed for scrutiny by a Special Standing Committee in the Commons. We have consulted widely in advance of the Bill and this process will help ensure a thorough and constructive debate on legislation of major importance to all our people.

For Immediate Release. No 37/99 Tuesday 16 February 1999

DON’T TREAT CHIMPS LIKE CHUMPS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing Ministers to ensure that chimpanzees and other captive animals are treated with respect. Following the revelations about Mary Chipperfield and her chimpanzee the MP sought assurances from Home Office Minister, Alan Howarth, that animals could be protected from their owners.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “All animals in private ownership should be safe from maltreatment. What happened to that poor chimp was an absolute disgrace.”

The Minister told the MP: "All non-domestic animals in private ownership are protected by the Protection of Animals Act 1911, under which it is a criminal offence to ill-treat or cause any unnecessary suffering to any captive animal. In addition, there is legislation for the keeping of these animals in certain circumstances. The Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925 gives local authorities and the police the power to enter at all reasonable times and inspect any premises in which performing animals are kept for training or exhibition, and to inspect those animals. The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 makes it an offence to keep certain animals, listed in a Schedule to the Act, without a licence from the local authority. Before issuing a licence the authority should be satisfied that suitable standards of health, welfare and accommodation for the animal will be provided."

Note to Editors: Under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, all zoos must be licensed by the local authority. Inspections are carried out to ensure that the standards of accommodation, staffing or management are adequate for the proper care and well-being of the animals.

For Immediate Release. No 38/99 Tuesday 16 February 1999

MP WANTS BLOODHOUNDS TO SNIFF OUT CRIMINALS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has sensed an opportunity to bring more criminals to book. He is backing moves by the Home Office to track down wrong-doers using the distinctly low tech bloodhound.

The Pendle MP asked Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the bloodhound in helping to track down suspects and detect criminal activity.

The Minister told the MP: "In April 1998, the Policing and Reducing Crime Unit at the Home Office supported an application under the Police Research Award Scheme from Essex Police to purchase and train two Bloodhound and two German Shepherd puppies. The proposal was to train the puppies in an alternative tracking method known as scent discrimination. This method depends on the dog tracking the individual scent of the person rather than the scent of the ground disturbance they have left.
The results of the study are being analysed at the moment and a full report will go to all Police Forces as soon as the analysis is complete which is expected with three months."

The MP says: "The floppy eared hound may be low tech but its got a high tech nose! We could do with a few of them in Lancashire."

For Immediate Release. No 39/99 Wednesday 17 February 1999

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people in Pendle out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance last month stood at 1,656 (a workforce rate of 4.4%) up from 1,462 (3.9%) in December. The latest figure is below the national average currently 4.6%.

There were 159 unfilled vacancies at the Job Centre in Nelson and 149 at Colne. 95 vacancies were notified during the month to the Nelson Job Centre and 91 to Colne.

Gordon Prentice MP said: "Manufacturing, an area vital to Pendle's well-being, is going through a very difficult period. The job losses in Buoyant and in Lear are very worrying but we've got to weather the storm until the effects of lower interest rates start boosting consumer confidence."

The MP raised the Buoyant job losses on the floor of the Commons last week. He met the receivers, Arthur Anderson, last Friday and is keeping in close touch with the GMB union.

Unemployment in Pendle peaked at a level of 3,355 in August 1992 and has fallen steadily since.

Note to Editors: Nationally there were 27.3 million people in work at the end of last year, the highest total since records began in 1973. Over 400,000 more people were in jobs than before the General Election. The monthly claimant count in January was down by 5,700 to 1,305,300, a jobless rate of 4.6%, the lowest figures since 1980. The number of people in full and part-time jobs grew to 27.3 million in the last quarter of last year, the highest since records began in 1973.

For Immediate Release. No 40/99 Thursday 18 February 1999

"ON THE RECORD" FOR LOCAL MP

Gordon Prentice MP will be talking about his Private Members' Bill on the Right to Roam this Sunday (21 February 1999) at 12 noon on BBC 1's "On the REcord" programme.

Note to Editors: The MP presented his Bill to the Commons in January and it comes up for teh second reading debate on Friday 26 March.

For Immediate Release. No 41/99 Thursday 18 February 1999

LOCAL MP BACKS BILL TO BAN FUR FARMING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is supporting The Fur Farming (Prohibition) Bill which will have its second reading in the House of Commons on 5 March.

The Bill, tabled by Labour MP, Maria Eagle, is intended to stop the unnecessary annual rearing and slaughter of over 50,000 mink, killed for their pelts in the UK's thirteen remaining mink farms. The mink are raised in rows of small barren wire cages without provision of water for swimming and so they often display signs of stress such as repetitive pacing and even self-mutilation.

Opinion polls commissioned independently by welfare group Respect for Animals and the RSPCA have consistently revealed that 76% of British people support a ban on fur farming and 87% oppose the wearing of fur. Labour made a pre-election promise to ban fur farming and in 1997 the Government renewed the Mink Keeping Order for just three years instead of the usual five. It wrote to farmers about its intent to phase out fur farms and a clause on compensation for the industry is contained in the Bill.

Gordon Prentice MP said: "Fur farming in the UK has declined by 70 per cent in the past decade. It is clearly impossible to recreate a mink's natural environment in a fur farm. These wild animals have no opportunity to express natural behaviour such as swimming, digging or foraging, which results in serious welfare problems for them."

He continued: "I have always been against fur farming. It is time to put a stop to this cruel practice. I will be backing the Bill."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 42/99 Thursday 18 February 1999

MP WELCOMES DEBATE ON A LIVING, WORKING COUNTRYSIDE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the launch of a new debate on the future shape of rural England. The initiative was launched this week by Environment Minister Michael Meacher and Countryside Minister at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Elliot Morley.

A seminar - one of a number planned for the English Regions - will be held in Skipton on Wednesday 24 March, hosted by Environment Minister, Alan Meale.

The discussion document sets out the key questions for delivering a shared vision for the countryside. It invites views on a range of issues the Government would like to consider in more detail as it takes forward work on a new Rural White Paper.

During the consultation the Government wants to discuss its aims of: promoting a living working countryside with thriving rural communities; having a working countryside contributing to national prosperity through sustainable development; strengthening the relationships between town and

country; protecting and enhancing the environment; and ensuring that the countryside is available to everyone.

Michael Meacher said: "Thriving rural communities and a high quality countryside are an integral part of the Government's commitment to building a modern country. We can only deliver this by working together. We have already started to achieve much for the countryside but we still need to take action to improve life in many rural areas. Rural England continues to change and we are determined that any future action we take

more follows

MP WELCOMES DEBATE ON A LIVING, WORKING COUNTRYSIDE

builds on the achievements we have already made while taking account of the changes."

The Agriculture Minister, Elliot Morley Added: "The role and pattern of agriculture will continue to change and "Rural England: A Discussion Document" sets the White Paper in the context of other government initiatives and consultations, including the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Urban White Paper, the Sustainable Development Strategy and the wide range of government policies that affect rural areas in England."

The Pendle MP added: "What happens in our rural areas really matters. There is a lot of hidden poverty in the countryside."

Note to Editors: Michael Meacher, Environment Minister Alan Meale and Mr Morley will attend a series of rural policy seminars to be held in each of the English regions during February and March. They will also be visiting a number of local initiatives to see how rural areas are planning for the future on the ground. The closing date for responses to the document is 30 April 1999. A White Paper on Rural England will be published later this year.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 43/99 Wednesday 24 February 1999

MP WELCOMES RECORD EXPORT LEVELS IN 1998

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news of the record levels of exports of UK goods and services in 1998.

Figures published this week show that the trade surplus in services reached a record £13.4 billion in 1998, as the value of exports grew by over 7%. The volume of goods exports showed a 2.8% growth over the previous year and the volume of manufactured exports rose by 1.7% compared with 1997.

The MP said: “This news is encouraging - especially as manufacturing has being going through a difficult period.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 44/99 Thursday 25 February 1999

MP BACKS CAMPAIGN TO BOOST THE NUMBER OF ASIAN ORGAN DONORS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is throwing his weight behind a new campaign by the Department of Health to increase the number of Asian organ donors. According to Health Minister, Baroness Hayman, there are 574 people from the Asian community on waiting lists for transplant organs in the UK. Around three per cent (at the 1991 census) of the population is from the Indian sub-continent, and around thirteen per cent of patients waiting for transplants are from the Asian community.

Welcoming the new campaign, the MP said that people of Asian origin were, for example, unfortunately more likely to develop kidney problems than the rest of the population. In November 1997, following a visit to the Renal Dialysis Unit at Preston, the MP predicted that the demand for dialysis in East Lancashire was set to soar over the next decade. At the time he said he wanted the new Government to start planning for the anticipated upsurge in demand.

The MP was told by the then Health Minister, Paul Boetang, that a statistical model predicted a very substantial increase in the total number of people in East Lancashire requiring dialysis, from 120 in 1996 to 220 in 2005. The MP says a lot of people on dialysis look forward to a transplant, hoping that an organ will become available.

The Department of Health’s new campaign is designed to raise awareness of the growing number of Asian patients currently on the transplant waiting lists, and encourage members of the community to become organ donors. It is supported by Asian celebrities, including news broadcaster Martin Bashir.

more follows

ASIAN ORGAN DONORS

The first stage of the advertising campaign will highlight key facts and issues specific to the health of the Asian community, and will develop over coming months into a call for action to the community to consider organ donation, and also to make their loved ones aware of their decision to become a donor.

Martin Bashir commented: "It's great to see the Government taking such a pro-active approach, and building long-lasting bridges with the Asian community. There is no doubt in my mind that we, as a community, need to be positive about organ donation. It is a difficult and sensitive issue, but the fact is we can help others from our own community by passing the message on."

Speaking from Westminster, the MP added: "I hope this new campaign is a big success. Transplants can be literally a matter of life and death. Clearly, the search for donors is never ending."

Note to Editors: On 11 February this year there were 537 Asian patients waiting for a kidney (13.7%); 7 (2.8%) waiting for a lung; 4 (4.5%) waiting for a heart/lung; 8 (4.6%) waiting for a lung and 18 (9.3%) waiting for a liver.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 45/99 Wednesday 24 February 1999

MP STEPS IN TO HELP EX-BUOYANT EMPLOYEES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has intervened with Ministers on behalf of the redundant Buoyant employees.

Following the shock decision of Buoyant to call in the receivers, the first 170 employees made redundant have found themselves ineligible for Jobseeker's Allowance until such time as they receive payments from the Secretary of State in respect of pay-in-lieu of notice and holiday pay. This means that until the payment from the National Insurance Fund is made - which could take up to 12 weeks - they receive no money whatsoever.

The MP said: “This is an appalling state of affairs we inherited from the previous Government as a result of the Employment Rights Act 1996. I did write to Ministers last year, as a result of a similar situation involving Lontex in Barnoldswick and I was told that it was hoped they would be in a position to resolve the issue in the near future. I have again contacted Ministers to see what progress has been made.”

The MP continued: “I have told Ministers of the hardship caused by this situation and I have asked them to ensure that payments are made as quickly as possible. I hope to have some news about this very shortly.”

Gordon Prentice added: “The key issue here is the possibility of the company being sold as a going concern and we are all hoping that this does happen. This would mean that these highly skilled employees, with many years of experience producing these much needed products, would retain their jobs. I also hope that the steps that the Government are now taking with the economy will bring back spending confidence and get people back out on to the High Street to buy what are often seen as luxury items.”

more follows.....

Note to Editors: Where employees are made redundant because of their employer’s insolvency, the Employment Rights Act 1996 allows the Secretary of State to pay out of the National Insurance Fund (NIF) certain sums due to the employee (including pay-in-lieu of notice and holiday pay). However, employees are not able to claim these payments until after their normal notice period would have expired and have a duty, under common law, to mitigate their loss where possible by, for example, claiming all the benefits which may be due to them.

Before the introduction of Jobseeker’s Allowance, Unemployment Benefit was paid in full to people in these circumstances and the Redundancy Payment Service of the D.T.I. would automatically mitigate the payment due from the NIF by the amount of benefit which had been paid. When JSA replace UB the rules provided that any income with is due to be paid but has not been paid has to be taken into account when working out a person’s entitlement to JSA.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 46/99 Thursday 25 February 1999

MP BATTLES ON FOR DUTY FREE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing efforts to force a rethink over duty-free shopping in Europe. The UK Government believes there is a good case for looking again at the decision made seven years ago under the previous Conservative government to end duty free sales in the EU from 1st July this year.

At the Vienna European summit last December heads of state asked the Commission to re-examine the implications of the ending of duty free including the possibility of a limited extension of the current arrangements.

The MP said: “In my view, the European Commission has not fully addressed the implications of ending duty free. The Commission's arguments that no delay is necessary to give time to address properly the implications for ending duty free are unsatisfactory and unconvincing. In particular, they have not taken full account of the practical difficulties with implementing the scheme which replaces duty free. All duty-free sales on cross-border plane and boat trips within the EU will be scrapped at the end of June, and only a unanimous decision of the 15 member states can win a reprieve.

Speaking at Westminster, the Pendle MP added: “Scrapping duty-free will cost thousands of jobs, and will hit regional airports like Manchester hard."

Note to Editors: After July 1999 there will still be duty free shops on ferries and at airports but only passengers travelling outside the European Union will be able to take advantage of them. Duty free for travel within the EU will have ended.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 47/99 Monday 1 March 1999

MP WELCOMES NATIONAL DEBATE ON THE EURO

Local MP Gordon Prentice has welcomed the publication of the Outline National Changeover Plan to prepare the UK for the Euro - should the people decide in a referendum to join. At the launch of the new currency on 1 January, the MP said the Euro would have an enormous impact on the UK - "whether we are in or out".

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government's position is crystal clear. We would consider joining the Euro if it is in the UK's economic interests and no decision would be made without going through the "triple lock" procedure - a recommendation from the Cabinet, a majority vote in Parliament and, finally, the consent of the people in a referendum."

Note to Editors: On 27 October 1997 the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the Government's policy on the European single currency. He said he would publish details of how, should it choose to do so, Britain could join the euro. This became know as the National Changeover Plan. In his statement he made clear the Government's view that membership of a successful euro would bring benefits to Britain in terms of jobs, investment and trade. And he set out the conditions necessary to satisfy our national economic interest.

Because of the magnitude of the decision, the Government believes - as a matter of principle - that whenever a decision to enter is taken by the Government, it should be put to a referendum of the British people. Government, Parliament and the people must all agree.

The Government has set out five economic tests which will have to be met before any decision to join can be taken:

whether the UK economy has achieved sustainable convergence with the economies of the single currency;
whether there is sufficient flexibility in the UK economy to adapt to change and other unexpected economic events;
whether joining the single currency would create better conditions for businesses to make long-term decisions to invest in the UK;

more follows

the impact membership would have on the UK financial services industry; and
whether joining the single currency would be good for employment.

These tests are challenging. Barring some fundamental and unforeseen change in economic circumstances, making a decision during this Parliament to join is unrealistic. But preparations should be made in this Parliament so that, should the economic tests be met, a decision to join a successful single currency can be made early in the next Parliament. Without preparation, it is not a practical option. The British people should be in a position to exercise genuine choice.

If we wish to have the option of joining, we must prepare. The sheer nature, scale and complexity of the arrangements require considerable time for such preparation. It is, for example, far more detailed in its consequences than decimalisation. If we do not start to face this reality now, we will simply not have the practical means necessary to make a choice.

This plan represents a snapshot of where preparations stand today on the practical aspects of possible UK entry to the single currency. The Government has already worked intensively with the business community and the public sector to ensure that the necessary preparations were in place to deal with the euro from 1 January 1999, and to understand the practical steps that the UK would need to take

during a changeover to the euro. This plan summarises the work done so far, and the work planned for the future.

The Outline Plan shows that it is possible to streamline the timetable adopted in Europe, with no disadvantage to our economy and some benefit. Overall we believe it should be possible to move:

> in 4 months from a Government decision to a referendum;
> in 24-30 months from a positive referendum result to the introduction of notes and coins;
> and a further six months before sterling notes and coins are withdrawn.

This means that the whole process from a positive referendum result to the withdrawal of sterling could be completed in around three years, considerably faster than the period required for the first wave of EMU participants.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 48/99 Thursday 25 February 1999

MP SAYS GOVERNMENT IS ON THE RIGHT TRACKS

The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister today attended a summit with the rail operators and stressed that today must be a day of commitment and a new beginning for rail in Britain. The summit was welcomed by Pendle MP who confesses that rail services in East Lancashire are “not great shakes”.

The MP said: “It is transport that often determines the quality of our life. A modern Britain needs a modern transport system. This means fast, punctual trains with passengers being given proper information, timetables that are easy to use and reasonable fares. Unfortunately, the Government is bound by contractual arrangements reached under the Tories.”

The Prime Minister told the rail operators: “I want to make it perfectly clear to you that you are on trial. You are failing your customers and those who continue to fail them have no place in the rail industry of the future.” The Prime Minister confirmed that poor performers would not be allowed to renew their operating franchises. Train companies are challenged to negotiate new franchises aimed at improving services.

Note to Editors: The Government is prepared to open negotiations now. This will lead to an extension of the franchise for the best performing companies, regardless of when their current franchises are

supposed to come to an end. The poor performers, those who are unwilling or unable to improve, will steer clear of this offer, and for them, the end of their franchise will mean exactly that. Labour has set out a strategy for a better more integrated and sustainable transport system which tackles the problems left by the Tories. The new Strategic Rail Authority will improve integration and co-ordination of the national rail network and act as "the passengers champion". But the rail operators need to play their part and the government is determined that the rail service that passengers demand is delivered.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

No 49/99 **EMBARGOED** until Wednesday 3 March 1999

MP GIVES THUMBS UP TO NEW BLITZ ON ROAD TAX CHEATS

A big clamp down against drivers who do not pay their road tax is to get underway in Lancashire next Wednesday (3 March). Lancashire, Cheshire, Gt. Manchester and Merseyside Police will be joining forces this month with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency [DVLA) to launch a major clampdown against road tax dodgers.

The move was welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice, who stirred controversy in October 1997 when he said untaxed vehicles should be "clamped and crushed". Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Like everyone else, road tax dodgers make me see red. The penalties for avoiding road tax should be swift and severe!"

The MP added: "I am also concerned about people driving without insurance. I think there is a strong case to be made for an "insurance disc" to be placed in the windscreen alongside the road tax one. I am in touch with Ministers about this idea which came from one of my constituents."

Note to Editors: During 1997/98, 501,000 evaders were successfully prosecuted, resulting in the recovery of some £5.3 million in fines and penalties. Not having a current tax disc is illegal and could be expensive. Offenders face a fine of up to £1,000 for a private car or motorcycle and up to £26,000 for a heavy goods vehicle. In addition to paying a fine, convicted offenders will have to pay backduty penalties from the date the vehicle was last licensed, together with costs.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 50/99 Tuesday 2 March 1999

MP BACKS CALL FOR DEBATE ON LONG TERM CARE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has backed the Government's call for a national debate on the future funding of long-term care for the elderly. The MP says the situation the new Government inherited was "manifestly unfair" with some elderly people in care being forced to sell their homes top pay for nursing costs.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Elderly people look for dignity in their retirement especially when frail and infirm. Forcing the elderly to sell their possessions to pay for the cost of care is nothing short of scandalous. The cost of caring for the elderly should be borne by the rest of us."

Health Secretary Frank Dobson told the Commons the Government had taken and endorsed the Commission's call for a debate on an issue which has no obvious answers. The Commission's report concludes that: the country does not face a demographic time bomb; the cost of long-term care should be shared by the individual and the state; costs should be separated and people in care should contribute to their living and housing costs but the taxpayer should pay for personal care costs.

Frank Dobson said: "The task of the Commission was to look into how best to provide sustainable long term funding for good quality care of the elderly and how the costs should be shared between taxpayers and the individual. Their report rightly makes clear this is something on which 'there is no obvious answer' and calls for an 'informed debate' on what they have recommended. "I support that call. The Government's response must await the outcome of that debate which I hope and expect will commence with today's publication of the Royal Commission's report."

He said the Commission estimated the cost of their proposals to

more follows

the taxpayer of between £800 million and £1200 million a year at 1995 prices. Outlining measures that the Government has already acted on or is soon to announce, the Secretary of State pointed to: preparing for independent inspection of care homes and social care through Regional Care Commissions; work on a National Service Framework for Older People to lay down how the NHS and local councils should provide high quality services in every part of the country; a charter setting standards

for long-term care; and £750 million over three years to promote rehabilitation and prevention.

Mr Dobson concluded: "I hope that the Royal Commission's report and the debate it will stimulate will help us find a way of ensuring that people have access to high quality long-term care that is fair to both individuals and the taxpayer. I hope that it will be founded on a consensus that will stand the test of time - a dependable contract across the generations. That is of great importance because what elderly people seek, second only to good health, is financial certainty and security. And that is what this Government is determined to deliver."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 52/99 Tuesday 9 March 1999

PRENTICE OFFERS HIS RIGHT TO ROAM BILL TO THE GOVERNMENT

In an unprecedented move, Labour backbencher, Gordon Prentice, has offered the Government his Private Members' Bill on the Right to Roam which is down for its second reading on 26 March.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the campaigning MP said: "The Government has at long last nailed its colours to the mast and has committed itself to bring in a statutory right to roam across 4m acres of open countryside. Michael Meacher told the Commons the Government would act as soon as Parliamentary time permits. My own Bill is in the legislative pipeline and I have now offered it to the Government. It can be amended as the Government sees fit. The important things is to get moving."

In a separate move, the Pendle MP wrote to all Labour MPs welcoming unreservedly the Government's commitment to legislate for a right to roam. In his letter he told MPs "This is a huge step forward and Michael Meacher deserves credit for the way he has handled things."

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP's letter to MPs reads: The Government's announcement yesterday to bring in a statutory right of access to 4m acres of open countryside is to be welcomed unreservedly. This is a huge step forward and Michael Meacher deserves credit for the way he has handled things.

There are some concerns about the mechanisms for delivering the commitment. People have raised doubts about the Local Access Forums which will be set up at county level. Clearly they must not be allowed to become the voice of the landowning interest. They will not, however, have a right of veto.

The second crucially important issue concerns the timing of new legislation. Last night I offered my Bill to the Government. There are no

PRENTICE OFFERS HIS RIGHT TO ROAM BILL TO THE GOVERNMENT

pre-conditions and the Government can take it over and amend it in any way it thinks fit. I want to see legislation on the statute book as soon as
possible and my Bill allows the Government to fast track things. Michael told me last night he would seriously consider my offer.

Clearly what we do about the second reading debate of my Right to Roam Bill depends on the Government's response to my offer. I shall write to you again as soon as I hear from Michael."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 52/99 Wednesday 10 March 1999

HAILS GOVERNMENT PLEDGE TO LEGISLATE FOR A RIGHT TO ROAM

constituency MP, **Joe Bloggs,** has hailed the Government's pledge to legislate for a right to roam. On Monday, Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, told the Commons that 4m acres of some of the most beautiful countryside in England and Wales would be opened up to the public.

And in an unprecedented move, Labour backbencher, Gordon Prentice, has offered the Government his Private Members' Bill on the Right to Roam which is down for its second reading on 26 March.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, **Joe Bloggs** said: "The Government has at long last nailed its colours to the mast and has committed itself to bring in a statutory right to roam across 4m acres of open countryside. Michael Meacher told MPs the Government would act as soon as Parliamentary time permits. But Gordon Prentice's Bill is already in the legislative pipeline and is coming up for debate on 26 March. Incredibly, he has now offered his Bill to the Government without any pre-conditions. It can be amended as the Government sees fit. The important thing is to get moving."

The Ministerial Aide added: “This is a huge step forward and Michael Meacher deserves credit for the way he has handled things.”

Contact

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 53/99 Tuesday 9 March 1999

BUDGET BOOST FOR PENDLE

Local MP Gordon Prentice, today welcomed Chancellor Gordon Brown's Budget, saying:

"Today's Budget marks another step forward in Labour delivering a better deal for the people of Pendle by rewarding work and supporting families.”

"This Budget delivers a better deal for working families. The further increase in Child Benefit to £15 for the eldest child will be widely welcomed, benefiting 12,300 families here in Pendle, together with the new Children's Tax Credit.”

"I strongly welcome the action this Budget takes to rebuild Britain's public services, in particular the new investment in our hospitals and schools. Over the next year local hospitals will see their A&E units re-equipped and modernised. And in the Budget the Chancellor made an immediate allocation of £2,000 for school books this year for each and every school in Pendle. And this Budget is only the start. In addition, beginning next month the Labour Government will be investing an extra £40 billion in Education and our National Health Service.”

"This Budget also delivers a better deal for pensioners, with a £1 billion package including an increase in the winter allowance from £20 to £100 for the next three years. This will benefit 16,259 pensioners in Pendle.”

"This Budget does more to reward work. To help lower and middle income families in Pendle there will be a new 10p rate of income tax on the first £1,500 of taxable income, which will be delivered within weeks. The basic rate of tax will be cut to 22p -

more follows

the lowest basic rate in 70 years - to reward work, and ensure

working families are better off. As a result, the tax rate on a family on average earnings here in Pendle will now be cut to its lowest level since 1972."

"With mortgage rates now at a 35 year low, this Budget locks in the economic stability this Government has secured, leaving behind the boom and bust of the past. The Budget also encourages small business in Pendle with a cut in the rate of small business tax to just 1Op.

"This Budget fulfils Labour's promise to the British people to make work pay, to support families, and to provide extra money for Britain's public services. This is a better deal for work and families, a better deal for Pendle, and a better deal for the people of Britain."

Note to Editors: This Budget delivers a better deal for the people of Britain by rewarding work and supporting families. Together with the other measures already coming into effect this year, the Budget will:

make people better off

- over 20 million households are better off, of which **7** million are households with children and 7 million are pensioner households
- On average, households will be £380 a year better off
- On average, working households will be £450 a year better off
- In addition, a homeowner with a typical mortgage will be an extra £900 a year better off as a result of interest rate reductions

supports families

The tax rate on a family on average earnings with two children will be cut to its lowest level since 1972

On average, families with children will be £740 a year better off

A single earner family with two children on £20,000 will be £460 a year better off

A single earner family with two children on £30,000 will be £275 a year better off

On average, pensioner households will be £240 a year better off.

more follows

BUDGET BOOST FOR PENDLE

700,000 children will be lifted out of poverty. When this Government came to office, a family with one child got £11.40 a week in Child Benefit. Now,
the same family receiving increased Child Benefit and the new Children's Tax Credit will get £23 a week - double the level of child support we inherited rewards work

rewards work

• From October 1999 the Working Families Tax Credit will provide a minimum income guarantee for families with a full-time earner of £200 per week, over £10,000 per year.

• From October 1999 the WFTC will mean that no family with children will pay income tax until their earnings exceed £235 a week or more than £12,000 a year.

• The new 10p rate of tax - the lowest for more than 35 years - will halve the tax bill for 1.8 million people of whom 1.5 million are in low-paid work

• 22p will be the lowest basic rate of tax for 70 years, to reward work and ensure working families are better off

• The reforms to National Insurance mean 900,000 low-paid people will no longer have to pay NICs

• On average, WFTC will give families an extra £24 a week compared with Family Credit

• A single person on the minimum wage will be better off by £300 a year,

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For immediate release No 54/99 Wednesday 10 March 1999

LOCAL MP DINES WITH DR MALIK MBE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, and his colleague Burnley MP Peter Pike celebrated the award of an MBE to Dr Malik, his wife Raisa and family by hosting a lunch at the House of Commons on Tuesday of this week.
Dr Malik joined the MP's straight a00fter receiving the award at Buckingham Palace.

Gordon Prentice said: "I was delighted that Dr Malik has received recognition of all his hard work for the people of Pendle in the form of an MBE. We are all proud of the contribution Dr Malik and his family have made in bringing the community together."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 55/99 Monday 8 March 1999

MP WELCOMES NEWS OF BUYER FOR BUOYANT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news that a buyer has been found for Buoyant.

The MP said: “This is wonderful news. I know many people have been working very hard to get this result and to hear that the company is to be sold as a going concern is proof that things can be turned round.”

The MP continued: “I understand that the current workforce is likely to be retained, but what I would particularly like to see is the 170 already made redundant being given the opportunity to get their jobs back.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 56/99 Wednesday 10 March 1999

MP CALLS FOR ACTION TO INCREASE BENEFITS TAKE-UP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has renewed his call on the Government to do more to increase the take up of benefits. Speaking in the wake of yesterday’s Budget announcement, the MP says that many people are missing out on billions of pounds of benefits to which they are entitled.

The MP asked the Social Security Minister, Angela Eagle, what estimates she had made of the total amount of benefits administered by the DSS unclaimed by those entitled to them; and what measures she proposed to encourage take-up.

The Minister told the MP: "Estimates of take-up of income-related benefits published for the year 1993/94 (covering Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Family Credit) indicate that the total amount unclaimed was in the region of £2.5 billion. More recent data is currently being reviewed following an error discovered in the date relating to take-up among pensioners, which suggests that the level of take-up is likely to be somewhat higher than previously thought."

The Minister added: "Recent initiatives to encourage take-up include a major publicity campaign to promote in work benefits which was launched on 1st June last year. This campaign comprised TV and radio advertisements and a direct mailshot to lone parents. A special help line was established to handle telephone enquiries arising from the campaign."

"We are also planning measures to encourage take-up of the Minimum Income Guarantee by pensioners. These measures will build on the findings from research into the reasons why

more follows

MP CALLS FOR ACTION TO INCREASE BENEFITS TAKE-UP

pensioners do not take up their Income Support entitlement, and
the nine pilot projects which the Department undertook last year to test different methods of encouraging pensioners to claim. We expect to publish the results of the research and the pilots later this year."

The Pendle MP added: "These benefits should not be seen as charity or state hand-outs. They are entitlements for which provision has already been made in the national accounts."

"£2.5 billion is a staggering sum of money which is just lying there waiting to be claimed by people fully entitled to it."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 57/99 Monday 15 March 1999

MURDOCH'S TAKE-OVER BID FOR MANCHESTER UNITED GOES TO DTI SECRETARY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice has urged Trade and Industry Secretary, Stephen Byres, to give the red card to Rupert Murdoch's planned take-over of Manchester United. On Friday of last week, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission completed its inquiry into the acquisition of the club by the media magnate's BSkyB.

Last September, when news of the planned take-over broke, the Pendle MP urged the Director General of Fair Trading to block Murdoch's move into soccer. The Director General had the responsibility for advising the then DTI Secretary, Peter Mandelson, on whether the takeover should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for full investigation.

At the time, the MP said: "Rupert Murdoch's empire is like a spreading stain. His huge interlocking businesses in the media and in sport and entertainment operate against the public interest.."

Speaking from Westminster today, the MP said: "If the MMC declares there are public interest considerations arising from the proposed merger, then the Secretary of State must come to the club's defence. If this deal goes through, before long we shall all be paying through the nose to watch the nation's favourite sport."

Notes to Editor: This reference to the MMC was made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 29 October 1998 Although there is no statutory time limit, the DTI is believed to have an administrative target of publishing MMC reports within 20 working days of receipt.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 58/99 Monday 15 March 1999

MP CALLS FOR ACTION TO CUT 999 INJURIES

Shock statistics showing that thousands people are injured in accidents every year involving police cars answering 999 calls or in pursuits have been unearthed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Last month, Channel 4 news reader, Sheena MacDonald, tragically hit the headlines when she was injured by a speeding police car when walking in Islington.

Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, told the Pendle MP today that in 1997/8, no fewer than 2,123 people were injured and 15 killed by police cars answering emergencies.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: “We all want help to come as quickly as possible but these statistics are simply dreadful. Speeding police cars are very dangerous.”

Police vehicle accidents arising from responses to immediate calls and pursuits: England and Wales

	1994/5	**1995/6**	**1996/7**	**1997/8**
Injuries	1,830 (a)	2,169 (b)	1,930 (c)	2,123
Fatalities	21 (a)	21 (b)	15 (c)	15

a = Figures from 3 forces are missing from the total
b = Figures from 2 forces are missing from the total
c = Figures from 2 forces are missing from the total

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 59/99 Tuesday 16 March 1999

MP IN FASHION

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will today be meeting some of the movers and shakers in the world of textiles and fashion.

The event, at the Mansion House in the City of London, brings together manufacturers of textiles, tailors from Saville Row, the British Knitting and Clothing Export Council and students from the London School of Fashion and Royal College of Art.

The Pendle MP, who is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Group, said: “The textile industry is enormously important to my own constituency and to the UK. We need to give it the support it deserves.”

A big contingent of textile workers from Pendle lobbied MPs at Westminster last November to press the case for textiles which still employs over 370,000 people, 10% of the UK's manufacturing work force. The lobby co-incided with the publication of the publication of the "Social Partners' Action Plan for Clothing and Textiles" - drawn up by the British Apparel and Textile Confederation and the three main trade unions which organise in the industry - the T&G, KFAT and the GMB.

UK textiles production is worth over £17 billion with roughly half produced in the clothing and knitwear sectors and the other from the textile sector. The UK ranks fourth in Europe in terms of the value of textile goods produced.

Speaking before the City event, the Pendle MP said: “Textiles are still big business in Pendle and the prosperity of the industry really matters to me."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 60/99 Tuesday 16 March 1999

MP SAYS IT’S TIME FOR CHANGE IN EUROPE

Following the publication of the damning report of the Committee of Independent Experts on fraud in the European Commission, the
Commissioners have done the right thing in resigning says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice..

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Labour members of the European Parliament took a strong line on fraud, securing a root and branch review of the way that the Commission manages and accounts for taxpayers' money. The European Parliament has shown that it can tackle fraud and mismanagement in the Commission.”

The MP added: “We now have to look to the future. We have the opportunity to see reform at the heart of the European Union, to put in place mechanisms to make it more accountable, transparent and more responsive to the everyday need of its citizens. After these shenanigans, we need a reformed Europe more than ever.”

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News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 61/99 Wednesday 17 March 1999

IT ALL ADDS UP SAYS PENDLE MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is right behind the Government's latest initiative to promote greater numeracy. Earlier this week the Prime Minister and Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett joined TV's Carol Vorderman to start the countdown to
Maths Year 2000.

The Pendle MP said: "The new drive is part of Labour's crusade to raise education standards. We face a very big challenge. The Tories left behind a shameful legacy on basic skills. 1 in 5 adults in England and Wales have very poor levels of numeracy. Nearly half of all eleven-year-olds failed to reach the expected standards in maths for their age."

The MP continued: "Too many people say with almost a badge of pride that they never did understand maths properly. Yet it is essential in everyday life and to the life of our economy - from checking the supermarket Bill to understanding the books in a small business. People who struggle with numbers are more likely to be unemployed for longer periods. In fact, poor numeracy is a bigger problem than poor literacy in holding down a job."

The MP added: "Maths Year 2000 will build on the success of our National Year of Reading - launched last September. It will give a national focus to our drive to raise numeracy standards. Maths Year 2000 will bring about a sea change in mathematics teaching and learning. We will enable every youngster to have a daily maths lesson - of up to an hour a day - from this September. Our target is that 75 per cent of 11 year-olds must reach the expected standard at age 11 by 2002. All local education authorities have agreed challenging numeracy targets."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 62/99 Thursday 18 March 1999

MP HAILS BREAKTHROUGH IN ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news that Lancashire is to be a test bed for new Government plans to make access to justice easier for people.

Geoff Hoon MP, Minister of State at the Lord Chancellor's Department, told the Pendle MP that Lancashire County
Council has agreed to be an Associate Pioneer Community Legal Service Partnerships. The Minister told the Pendle MP: "This means they will be at the forefront of the Government's commitment to increasing access to justice for ordinary people."

The Minister continued: "Our vision for the Community Legal Service is that every area should benefit from a local network of legal and advice services of consistently good quality, and to ensure that local people are aware of, and have greater access to the information and help they need. Central to achieving this will be the establishment of Community Legal Service Partnerships in every local authority area in England and Wales. These will provide a forum for the local authority to co-operate with the Legal Aid Board and other key funders, as well as local providers, to co-ordinate the funding and planning of local legal and advice services and encourage the development of referral arrangements between providers."

The MP said: "This is great news. Too often, access to justice is denied to people. We aim to do something about it."

Note to Editors: Forty local authorities have committed themselves to helping the Government develop the Community Legal Service aimed at bringing grassroots legal help and advice to the public. The 40 local authorities will play a key part in developing the best practice blueprint for a Community Legal Service Partnership (CLSP).This will be a forum for the local authority to co-operate with the Legal Aid Board and other key

more follows

funders, as well as local providers, in planning legal and advice services, encouraging the development of referral arrangements between providers, and ensuring that local people are aware of, and have access to, help when they need it.

Known as Associate Pioneers, the 40 local authorities will work closely with one another as well as with the six Pioneer authorities which are spearheading the initiative. The Associate Pioneers represent all of England and Wales. They were selected because they already take an active responsibility for funding advice providers in their area and ensuring that they achieve value for money.

Lord Irvine said, "The local authorities which have been selected to act as Associate Pioneers reflect a diversity of areas and experiences. I am delighted that my proposals for a Community Legal Service have received such a positive response. The groundbreaking work being undertaken by the Pioneers and Associate Pioneers will help to make the Community Legal Service a reality. My long term vision is of a comprehensive network of legal advice points across England and Wales. They will deliver quality legal information and advice to the disadvantaged and socially excluded in areas of law which most directly affect their everyday lives."

Note 2 to Editors: The Access to Justice Bill, published on 3 December, contains provisions for the Community Legal Service. A new body, the Legal Services Commission, will be required to establish, maintain and develop the Community Legal Service. The Legal Services Commission will maintain a Community Legal Services Fund which it will use to contract for legal services as part of the Community Legal Service. The Lord Chancellor intends to publish a consultation paper on the Community Legal Service next month.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 63/99 Thursday 18 March 1999

MP CALLS FOR CRACKDOWN ON "SKY LOUTS"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling on the Government to crack down on loutish behaviour on planes. The MP quizzed Transport Minster, Glenda Jackson, on the growing problem of air rage.

The Minister told the MP that in 1997 there were 88 incidents of disruptive behaviour by passengers which had actual or potential safety implications. Of these, some 24 incidents involved physical violence or the need by the crew to restrain a passenger.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Louts who make flying a misery for their fellow passengers should be banned from flying for life. An endorsement on their passport would do the trick for international flights. They are a complete menace."

Note to Editors: Glenda Jackson told the Pendle MP in a PQ today: "Under the Mandatory Occurrence Report Scheme currently established by article 106 of the Air Navigation (No 2) Order 1995, the commander of a UK registered or operated aircraft must report to the Civil Aviation Authority any incident "endangering, or if not corrected would endanger, the aircraft, its occupants or any other person". The CAA's MORS database does not have a classification of "air rage" and it is therefore not possible to provide the figures requested. However, we have recently reviewed the 1997 MORS reports relating to passenger behaviour. This revealed some 88 incidents of disruptive behaviour by passengers which had actual or potential safety implications. Of these, some 24 incidents involved physical violence or the need by the crew to restrain a passenger.

It is because of the lack of accurate information on the scale of the problem that we have established a new system for airlines to report to the CAA all incidents of disruptive behaviour by passengers on board UK aircraft. The first figures from this new reporting system should be available later this year.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 64/99 Tuesday 23 March 1999

GETTING BRITAIN BACK ON THE BUS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing the drive to make the bus an attractive and affordable means if transport. The MP was speaking at Westminster as Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced a new strategy for putting buses at the heart of the government's integrated transport policy.

The strategy is set out in a new white paper published today, “From Workhorse to Thoroughbred - a better Role for Bus Travel”.

The Pendle MP said: “In the ten years following bus deregulation outside London in 1986, the number of passenger journeys decreased by 29 per cent. Under the previous Government, more than three million fewer passenger journeys were made by bus, on average, every day. This decline is changing. Passengers are returning to the bus. The number of passengers is up one per cent for the whole country, with some areas like the West Midlands showing use up by five percent.”

The MP added: “Buses now account for two-thirds of all public transport journeys - over four billion bus journeys a year. This growth provides the opportunity for buses to be the cornerstone of the integrated transport policy.”

“Passengers want modern buses running reliable, frequent and convenient services. The challenge for the bus industry is provide more new buses and concentrate on service quality.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 65/99 Tuesday 23 March 1999

CRISIS IN KOSOVO

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has warned of the dangers of a full scale Balkan War with NATO pitted against Slobodan Milosevic, President of Yugoslavia.

Earlier today, the Pendle MP who is on the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, met a delegation of MPs from Macedonia, which lies immediately to the south of Kosovo and on whose territory 5,000 UK troops are stationed.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Milosevic is President of a pariah state which is pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing. Clearly, we cannot stand back and do nothing. But once the go-ahead is given for the use of air power, this could unleash a ferocious response from the Serbs and we may be drawn into a major land war. The situation is very, very serious indeed."

The MP added: "We all want to see a peaceful settlement in Kosovo. I would like to see a UN protectorate declared over Kosovo as a way of keeping the Serbs from the throats of the ethnic Albanians who form the vast majority of the Kosovan population."

"President Milosevic should accept the agreement negotiated in Paris, including all aspects of the implementation. He should sign the Kosovo peace deal and end the massacre of Kosovo Albanians."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 66/99 Tuesday 23 March 1999

MP RIDICULES "CARING CONSERVATISM"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has ridiculed the Opposition Leader's call for the creation of a new, more caring, conservatism.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "As an act of desperation, William Hague has called for a more caring Conservative Party. He has even denounced the policies of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. However, people in Pendle, as elsewhere, have a longer memory than the Tories and recall: the two worst recessions in living memory; over 1 million young people becoming unemployed each year; record

business failures and mortgage misery - with interest rates at over 15 per cent each year and economic boom and bust.”

Gordon Prentice continued: “The Conservatives say they are now caring, yet in office they neglected our schools and hospitals and now they oppose the New Deal, the minimum wage and the £40 billion extra for education and health.”

“They would also scrap the Working Families Tax Credit which kicks in on 1 October this year which will hugely benefit thousands of lower income families here in Pendle.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 67/99 Sunday 28 March 1999
The Press Association filed this story on Friday 26 March

COMMONS CLASH OVER RIGHT TO ROAM

Tory and Labour MPs clashed today over Government plans to bring in a statutory right to roam for ramblers. Gordon Prentice (Lab Pendle) told the Commons it was astonishing in 1999 that "we are still strangers in our own country".

The countryside was not the "personal fiefdom of the country landowners", he insisted. "The land is ours to share and enjoy," Mr Prentice said in second reading debate on his Right to Roam Bill.
He added: "We're told that landowners are the true guardians of the countryside and the rest of us are all wreckers.

"But ramblers haven't poisoned the countryside with pesticides. We haven't polluted the watercourses. We haven't silenced the countryside as the birds have perished and we are not responsible for grubbing up the hedgerows."

Tory James Gray (Wiltshire N) said his remarks showed "class hatred and class warfare" rather than any real interest in rambling was behind the move. But Mr Prentice said a statutory right to roam was long overdue and the voluntary approach to opening up access had not worked.

Earlier this month Environment Minister Michael Meacher announced that, despite intense speculation to the contrary, the Government planned to bring in its own Right to Roam legislation -- giving walkers access to four million acres of mountain and

moorland in England and Wales. Mr Prentice today welcomed the promise, saying there was no difference between his objectives and the Government's. He is expected to withdraw his Bill in favour of ministers' measure - for which no date has been fixed - but aims to use today's debate to talk about the general issues

more follows

COMMONS CLASH OVER RIGHT TO ROAM

surrounding greater access for walkers.

Mr Prentice acknowledged that the Government did not plan to use his Bill as a vehicle for reform. Ministers, he said, feared that it would be wrecked by landowning interests in the Lords and wanted to include wider wildlife measures.

For a century the people had struggled against landowners for access to the mountains and moorlands. "Now, as we approach the millennium it is an astonishing fact that we are still strangers in our own country. Millions of people are fed up with sneaking and creeping around the countryside afraid of upsetting people."

Mr Prentice said, to cheers from Labour backbenchers: "We all expect a Government Bill in November. "We hang on to the Prime Minister's every word and he told us that 1999 was Labour's year of delivery. On the Right to Roam, it really is time to deliver."

Tory former minister James Paice (Cambridgeshire SE) said the Bill "served to distinguish and demonstrate the divide between socialism and capitalism and property ownership. It is a totally socialist measure," he said. Turning to Mr Prentice, he remarked: "I am sure you will take that as a compliment.

"The Right to Roam is not based on any real putative enjoyment of the countryside." Mr Paice, who admitted owning 10 acres of land, declared: "It is based on one thing and one thing alone - that most evil of human traits: envy, envy of private property, a belief that it should be available to everybody, that nobody should have the right to restrict access to it."

Labour's Andrew Bennett (Denton and Reddish), Rambler's Association president, dismissed the charge that there was "something revolutionary" about the desire for a right to roam.
"All we are saying is that the good practice in some parts of the country should be extended to other areas."

Giving walkers statutory rights to be on other areas would "lighten the load" for farmers and landowners in parts of Snowdonia, the Pennine Way and the Lake District which got crowded at peak times, he said.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 68/99 Tuesday 23 March 1999

TEACHERS TO LOBBY MP OVER PLANNED SHAKE UP OF PROFESSION

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be listening carefully to local teachers who are expected at Westminster tomorrow (Wednesday 24 March) as part of a big National Union of Teachers lobby.

The NUT is concerned about the Government's plans for the teaching profession which include far reaching proposals to link pay with performance. Other proposals include the appointment of Advanced Skills Teachers.

Earlier this month, the MP met local secondary school head teachers to discuss the Government's proposals.

Speaking from Westminster in advance of the lobby, the MP said: "I am keenly aware of the reservations that many in the teaching profession have about the practical implications of some of the proposals. That is why I am so keen to hear from the chalk face, so to speak."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 69/99 Wednesday 24 March 1999

BUILD ON BROWNFIELD SITES FIRST SAYS PRENTICE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the Government's radical new planning guidance to local councils urging them to build new houses on brownfield sites. Over

recent years, decisions on the location of the new housing that is needed in Pendle have generated tremendous controversy.

In a consultative document published this week, the Government now says that councils will have to consider developing on brownfield land and re-using existing property before releasing greenfield land for housing development.

Planning Minister Richard Caborn said: "We are committed to revitalise our towns and cities and to protect our countryside from unnecessary development. Our aim is to achieve nothing less than an urban renaissance. The guidance emphasises the importance of making the best use of previously-developed urban land and existing buildings in order to achieve our 60% land recycling target. This will minimise the use of greenfield sites, encourage urban regeneration and help create more sustainable patterns of development."

The Minister continued: "Local planning authorities are also advised to provide a greater choice of housing to meet the nation's changing housing needs, and to promote mixed development. We propose to introduce a sequential approach to the choice of sites. Local planning authorities will be required to consider using previously developed land and buildings before releasing greenfield sites for development. Local planning authorities are also required to consider the capacity of the urban area to
accommodate additional development. The guidance proposes the use of higher densities, reduced car parking and the release for *more follows:*

BUILD ON BROWNFIELD SITES FIRST SAYS PRENTICE

housing of excess land held for other types of development. The Government is also looking for an improved quality of development and is therefore looking for improved urban design, better layouts and wider choice of sizes and types of housing. It advises developers and local authorities to place the needs of people before cars in designing the layout of residential developments. Creating a more attractive residential environment must be a central aim for new development."

"The Government recognises that not all additional housing development can be accommodate on previously developed sites. The next most sustainable option is to develop urban extensions, making use of existing infrastructure and public transport links."

The Pendle MP added: " I hope people will respond to the consultation exercise which ends on 28 May. It is important. I want everyone's point of view to be considered."

Note to Editors: The key messages of the new PPG3: Housing are that the Government expects local planning authorities to: Provide sufficient housing opportunity and greater housing choice by: - providing sufficient housing so that everyone has the opportunity of a decent home.

The Government expects the regional planning conferences/local authorities to take a responsible approach. - providing greater choice and better mix of types, sizes and location of housing; - seeking to meet the housing needs of the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing and special housing; Promote the reuse of land and buildings for housing by: - promoting the re-use of previously-developed land and the conversion of existing buildings - with a 60% target for England and each region producing realistic but challenging regional targets to achieve this.

Promote sustainable patterns of development by: - establishing how much housing can be accommodated within urban areas, allowing for higher densities, less car parking and better housing layouts. - creating a more attractive urban environment, designed around the needs of people rather than cars - protecting and improving open space, greenery and sports provision - ensuring protection of public open space, playing fields and allotments from development.

Development outside urban areas Since up to 40% of the additional housing may have to be outside existing urban areas, planners will need to: - create planned extensions to our towns and cities - develop in public transport corridors - to a limited degree, expand or build within existing villages; and - if appropriate, create new settlements.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 73/99 Thursday 1 April 1999

LOCAL DENTISTS URGE HEALTH MINISTER TO PUT HIS MONEY WHERE HIS MOUTH IS

A delegation of local dentists will be meeting with Health Minister, John Denham, next month in a bid to safeguard NHS dentistry in Pendle. The top level meeting, organised by local MP Gordon Prentice, will give local dentists an opportunity to quiz the Minister responsible. The delegation will include Mr Bill Ashworth, Chairman of the East Lancs Health Authority and Dr Gary Whittle, Consultant in Dental Public Health.

The MP said: “The Government is pouring millions of pounds into NHS dentistry but, quite inexplicably, too little of it is finding its way to Pendle. Here in Lancashire we have the worst dental health in the country and I am keen to extract from the Government the money that this area needs that will bring a smile to those in need of an NHS dentist.”

The MP continued: “NHS dentistry needs a helping hand for it to survive and prosper. The plain fact is that more needs to be done to help those regions such as the North West where dental health is so poor. Along with local dentists I shall be pressing the Health Minister to put his money where his mouth is.”

Note to editor: East Lancs. Health Authority applied for £605,600 through the Investing In Dentistry scheme to improve access to NHS dental treatment but so far only £44,000 has been allocated.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 71/99 Tuesday 30 March 1999

IT IS DELIVERY TIME says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says it's time for the Government to deliver. Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "When we make promises we keep them. Throughout 1999 the Government will be seen delivering its promises - getting the fundamentals right and building a better Britain for everyone, not just the few."

"There are difficulties and problems to overcome. No-one said it would be easy. Manufacturing, in particular, is going through troubled times and the Government must pitch in and help."

"From 1 April the new minimum wage will make work pay. Nearly two million people will benefit, two thirds of them women. Workers are already benefiting from the right to three weeks paid leave which will rise to four weeks from November."

"The extra £40 billion investment in schools and hospitals starts to come on stream in April. There will be free eye tests for the over-60s. The Conservatives introduced them in April 1989. From 1st April charges for eye tests for the over-60s will be abolished."

"There will be free access to museums and galleries for children
With an extra £100 million investment, national collections will introduce free access for children. Free access will be extended to pensioners from next year and everyone from 2001."

"Business tax rates will be cut by another 1% to their lowest ever level. The standard rate of corporation tax will be 30% and the small business rate 20%."

"There will be better NHS care. No-one whose GP suspects them of having breast cancer will wait more than 2 weeks to see a

page 1 of 3 - More follows

specialist. The new National Institute for Clinical Excellence is set up to raise standards throughout the NHS. And the internal market finally ends with the introduction of new Primary Care Groups. NHS Direct, the new 24-hour nurse-led

telephone help line, will be extended to cover 40% of England. By the end of 2000 everyone will have access to NHS Direct."

"Homelessness will be tackled. The £34 million Homelessness Action Programme will tackle homelessness outside London."

"This year, the new Regional Development Agencies start up. They are economic powerhouses to improve the prospects of all the English regions. And on 1 April, the new Countryside Agency is established, by merging the Rural Development Commission and the Countryside Agency, with an increased budget. This is on top of the £150 million being invested in public transport improvements in rural areas over the next three years."

"From 6 April, there will be a new 10p starting rate of tax. The new 10p starting rate of tax - the lowest for more than 35 years - will apply to the first £1500 of taxable income. It will reward work and make people better off. It will halve the tax bill for 1.8 million people of whom 1.5 million are in low paid work. And taxes will be cut for all employees who pay National Insurance Contributions to help make work pay - a gain of over £65 a year for approximately 20 million people."

"1999 is the first anniversary of the New Deal. Over 100,000 young people have already gone into jobs, work experience or training through New Deal. From April the New Deal for the over 25s will be extended to 90,000 long-term unemployed. And the New Deals for the young and long-term unemployed will be extended to partners of the unemployed."

"New Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) will be introduced to help people save. We have set CAT (Cost, Access and Terms) standards for ISAs so that people can save with confidence."

"And we will continue the crackdown down on crime. New anti-social behaviour orders to tackle criminal anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods will take effect. A £250m crime reduction programme will begin to fund projects this year including £50m to tackle domestic burglary in 500 of the worst-affected areas.

IT IS DELIVERY TIME says MP

"From 12 April, we will see a record rise in Child Benefit. It will be raised for the eldest child by £2.95 to £14.40 - the largest rise ever, benefiting over six million families. There will be an equivalent increase for poorer families with an increase to the Family Premium in Income Support and Job Seeker's Allowance."

"There will be a fairer deal for the poorest pensioners on income support. The new minimum income guarantee for pensioners will be introduced - £75 a week for single pensioners and almost £117 a week for pensioner couples, nearly £5 extra a week for single pensioners and over £7 for couples, benefiting 1.5 million pensioners. From winter 1999/2000, all pensioners will receive their annual winter fuel payments, increased from £20 to £100."

"From 5 October, the new Working Families Tax Credit will be introduced, guaranteeing low-paid families with a full-time worker a minimum income of £200 a week with no tax to pay on incomes up to £235, benefiting over one million people."

"On the same day, the new Disabled Persons Tax Credit will be introduced, guaranteeing a minimum income of at least £150 a week for a single disabled person who moves from benefit to full-time work earning the national minimum wage, and £220 for a couple with one earner and one child."

The MP added: "The Government is trying hard to turn things round for the better."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 72/99 Tuesday 30 March 1999

MP CALLS FOR A SOVEREIGN PALESTINIAN STATE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. His Commons motion, tabled in the names of six MPs, calls for a negotiated peace settlement which reaffirms the absolute Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state and welcomes the EU's commitment to the security of both the Palestinian and Israeli people.

Speaking at Westminster, the MP said: "The world is ablaze with conflicts at the moment. We need to re-double our efforts to bring security and peaceful co-existence to flash-points such as the Middle East and Kashmir."

Note to Editors: The Commons motion tabled by the Pendle MP reads: "That this House welcomes the declaration by the heads of states and government of the EU on the Middle East Peace Process made at the Berlin Summit which calls for a negotiated peace settlement based on the principles of international law, Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the Madrid and Oslo agreements and reaffirms the absolute Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state; welcomes the EU's commitment to the security of both the Palestinian and Israeli people and joins the EU in the belief that the best guarantee of Israel's security will be its acceptance of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian state; applauds the stated intention of the EU heads of state to declare their readiness to recognise a Palestinian state in due course; and urges all parties to the conflict to negotiate in good faith to achieve a settlement in the Middle East based on the principles referred to above."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 74/99 Wednesday 31 March 1999

IT'S A NICE ONE says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the setting up and launch today of the new National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). The MP says the new Institute will help ensure patients get fairer and faster access to quality treatment in the NHS.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The NHS is the fairest and most efficient health care system in the world. But it could still be better. Currently, some patients aren't getting fast and fair access to quality treatment. That is why the NICE is being created to help ensure access that is fast and fair."

"NICE is designed to ensure that every NHS patient in the country gets fair access to quality treatment; it will identify best practice and help spread it quickly; and it will give advice to doctors and nurses on which treatments work best for patients and the NHS and which do not."

The MP added: "NICE is part of the drive for quality in the NHS that the Government is delivering. We are setting standards nationally, delivering standards locally; and monitoring standards externally. With the creation of NICE alongside our other reforms for a new NHS, we are bringing about a real change in the quality of health care."

The Pendle MP is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Multiple Sclerosis Group and is President of the Pendle group. He is also involved with the Charity, Arthritis Care, and takes a close interest in dentistry and health issues generally.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 75/99 Wednesday 31 March 1999

MP CONDEMNS STAG HUNTERS AFTER SCHOOL PLAYGROUND DRAMA

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has attacked stag hunters in Devon for allowing four hounds from the Devon and Somerset Staghounds pack to pursue a terrified stag into the playground of the Parracombe school on Exmoor.

Press Association reports today say the children were terrified as the hounds barked at the animal and bit it.

The Pendle MP said: “Setting hounds on stags is absolutely barbaric. What happened here must have been a pure nightmare for the children. The sooner Parliament outlaws hunting with hounds the better. This is further confirmation that early action is needed.”

A Countryside Alliance spokesman was quoted by PA as saying that “in the main our hounds are under very close control."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 76/99 Wednesday 31 March 1999

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES GET GOING

The promise of a stronger North West regional economy comes closer tomorrow with the creation of England's eight Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says this marks a step change in the delivery of economic development and regeneration.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The RDAs will help address the economic deficit of the English regions. Only two English regions currently perform above the European average for GDP per head. Our regions must become more competitive if they are to do better in the global market place.”

The MP added: “By bringing together economic, social and environmental issues, the RDAs will provide the framework for sustainable economic growth. They are building partnerships for prosperity - strong and effective and covering a wide range of interests, including the developing regional chambers.”

Last December, the MP welcomed the appointment of Dennis Mendoros of Euravia in Kelbrook and Burnley's Kath Reade to the board of the new North West Regional Development Agency.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 77/99 Wednesday 31 March 1999

MP HAILS NEW DEAL FOR PENDLE SCHOOLS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed new help for Pendle schools to help bring their buildings up to scratch. The money comes as part of the Government's new deal for schools which channels cash into the fabric of schools - such as windows, heating systems and roof repairs.

Among the Pendle schools to benefit are Barnoldswick CE, Trawden County Primary and Laneshawbridge County Primary who all get help with their heating systems. Altogether, £601,000 has been earmarked for 17 Lancashire schools for boilers/heating.

Colne West Street County Primary is to get help for roof works - part of a £549,700 allocation for roof works for 13 schools in Lancashire. Window repairs and window replacements are to take place at Colne Primet County Primary and West Craven High School in Barnoldswick - part of a total grant of £516,000 to 14 Lancashire schools with window problems.

Grants for rewiring go to Barnoldswick Gisburn Road County Primary, Colne Park CP and Nelson Walton Lane Nursery. Altogether, the new deal has allocated £1,007,100 to 18 Lancashire schools for much needed electrical rewiring work.

Playground repairs are to take place at Bradley Nursery and at Walverden County Primary.

Gordon Prentice commented: "Unfortunately, the Government inherited an enormous maintenance backlog and there is a tremendous amount to do. But we are making a start. The learning environment is terribly important. Children cannot be expected to give 100% if they are being taught in ancient school building that are showing their age. We aim to do something about that."

More follows:

MP HAILS NEW DEAL FOR PENDLE SCHOOLS

Note to Editors: Education Secretary, David Blunkett wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: "We are very pleased to be able to write to you today with details of the outcome of the third phase of the New Deal for Schools programme (NDS3) - capital grant of around £340 million delivering over 1,000 projects worth a total of £350 million, starting in 1999-2000.

This very substantial package follows the first two successful phases of NDS, in which we allocated £340 million of grant, and underlines our determination to improve the quality of the school building stock in our drive to raise standards.

A list of the grant allocated to each Local Education Authority and a breakdown of the schools which will benefit in the Authority in which your constituency falls are attached. In a small number of cases, where a final allocation has still to be determined, discussions between our officials and the Authority concerned are continuing. We will write to you again, once those allocations have been finalised.

This package will benefit the pupils in around 5,000 schools. Some £240 million will go on much needed work to improve the condition of school buildings: including leaking roofs, replacement of outdated heating systems and the removal of dilapidated temporary classrooms, some of which date back to the Second World War.

Just as significantly, we have placed particular emphasis in this round of NDS on projects which will raise school standards - the core of our education agenda - and the response from Local Education Authorities has been very encouraging.

We are supporting 47 such schemes. Some of these are major whole-school projects: for example, where a school in difficulty is undergoing a Fresh Start. Many others will improve the learning environment for staff and pupils alike, in circumstances where schools are striving to improve pupil performance in challenging circumstances. A number of others will tackle social exclusion problems reducing truancy and exclusion rates, for example, or making school facilities available to the wider community.

This package is only the latest stage in our continuing drive to improve the quality of the school building stock. The proposed investment over the remainder of this Parliament amounts to more than £5 billion - a massive contribution to tackle the maintenance backlog, providing an appropriate learning environment and helping to raise standards.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

No 78/99 Embargoed until Tuesday 6 April 1999

MP WELCOMES NEW 10p RATE OF INCOME TAX

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today joined Chancellor Gordon Brown in welcoming the introduction of the new 10p rate of income tax - the lowest starting rate of tax for more than 35 years.

The MP said: "From today every taxpayer in Britain will see the benefit of the action Labour is taking to make work pay."

"The introduction of the new 10p rate will mean a tax cut for every taxpayer in Britain. They will see the benefit of the new 10p rate in their pay-packets from this May - just a few weeks from now."

"Every taxpayer will benefit. And 1.8 million low-paid people will actually see their tax bill halved as a result of the new lower rate - a gain of £150 a year. In addition, because of the reforms this Government has made to National Insurance Contributions, every worker in Britain who pays National Insurance will see their tax bill cut by £65 a year."

"As a result, nearly 20 million people will be better off - and this tax cut will be in their pay packets this month. And the Budget went further, by cutting the basic rate to 22p. This cut will come into effect next April and will ensure that all lower and middle income families are better off. We are making work pay."

"Business tax rates have also been cut - to their lowest ever level. From today, corporation tax will be cut to 30p and the small business rate will be cut to 20p."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 79/99 Tuesday 13 April 1999

ROLLS ROYCE LOBBY AT WESTMINSTER

Workers from Rolls Royce plants around Britain will be at Westminster this Thursday (15 April) to lobby MPs about job losses recently announced by the company. Shop stewards from the RR sites in Barnoldswick are expected to be there.

Speaking from Westminster in advance of the meeting organised by the engineering union, the AEU, the Pendle MP said: "Rolls Royce is a big employer in Pendle and it is doing very well. In these circumstances people find it quite inexplicable why jobs are threatened. I am very concerned about things."

Note to Editors: Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, wrote to the Pendle MP on 9 April as follows: "Thank you for your letter of 30th March.

As you say, the company's business strategy has produced a record order book, but our continuing success depends upon our ability to turn that order book into improved profitability to sustain the levels of investment to maintain our competitiveness.

This means that we are always seeking to find ways to improve our productivity and cost effectiveness and our company-wide programme "Better Performance Faster" gives everyone a framework in which to contribute. Some of the improvements in productivity will involve changes in individual roles and some reduction in the number of people employed; there is also a need to recruit some specialist skills.

Our approach has been to make severance terms selectively available on a voluntary basis and to invest in the retraining of people within the company to learn new skills, as well as recruiting trainees and people with capabilities we need. At Barnoldswick, we have announced potential job losses of 90 in our Fan Systems business and there has been continuing consultation with the trade unions to help minimise the particular impact of some deferments in customer delivery requirements.

I hope this helps you to understand our approach which is to deal sensitively with the pressures arising from maintaining the company's competitive position in a challenging international marketplace.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 80/99 Tuesday 13 April 1999

MP MOVES ON ROAD HAULAGE DISPUTE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the setting up of a new forum for the road haulage industry. The MP's statement today comes in the wake of widespread disruption by hauliers who claim the recent budget put them at a big disadvantage when compare with continental truckers.

The new forum include representatives from the Road Haulage Association, the Freight Transport Association and the Transport and General Workers Union, as well as Transport, Treasury and Industry Ministers. It will examine the competitive pressures facing the industry with a view to establishing a consensus on the exact nature of the problems facing the industry and the action which can be taken to help tackle them.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Clearly, the Government recognises the impact which taxation can have on competitiveness and profitability. That is why it has tried consistently to strike a balance between the legitimate needs of the road haulage industry and environmental concerns."

In a letter from Transport Minister, John Reid, to the Pendle MP, the Minister wrote: "As regards Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), in his 1999 Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer froze the rates for over 90% of all lorries. In addition, the maximum VED

discount for reduced pollution lorries was doubled to £1,000. As the Chancellor announced in his pre-Budget statement last year, VED rates for vehicles with an 11.5 tonne drive axle weight were set at a higher rate in order to discourage their use in view of the much greater road damage they caused. But in order to strike a balance, a new favourable rate was established for 41 tonne, six axle vehicles to reduce road damage.

more follows

ROAD HAULAGE DISPUTE

The Budget also created a more attractive price differential for ultra-low sulphur diesel and cut the tax on road fuel gases by 29 per cent.

The question of whether hauliers from the UK are disadvantaged in respect of other countries has to take all aspects of industry costs into account. While direct operating costs such as fuel tax and VED are important factors, they are only part of the picture. Other factors, such as the much higher social costs that apply in other Member States of the European Union and the lower rates of corporation tax that apply here also need to be taken into account. It is in that context that assessments of competitive advantage should be made.

While it is true that other EU states have lower rates of fuel duty and VED, the total tax burden on UK business is lower than that of our major EU competitors. Indeed, Government research shows that for a firm operating 50 38 tonne lorries the annual overall costs will be higher in France by £425,000, in the Netherlands they will be around £600,000 more and in Belgium they will be approximately £800,000 extra.

It is in this context that the Government has balanced economic and environmental considerations. The fuel duty escalator has been the single most important economic measure for reducing carbon dioxide emissions from road transport in the UK ever since it was introduced by the previous Conservative Government. It is important to point out that the escalator was established by the then Tory Chancellor, Norman Lamont, in his last Budget in March 1993 at the rate of three per cent above the rate of inflation. Eight months later, in his first Budget, Kenneth Clarke, increased the rate by two thirds to five per cent. The purpose of introducing the fuel duty escalator was to encourage all motorists to reduce their fuel consumption by using more fuel efficient vehicles, adopting greener driving styles or lower vehicle use.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 81/99 Tuesday 13 April 1999

MP CALLS FOR ACTION TO END POLICE CAR DEATHS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for the immediate implementation of new rules covering the way police drivers respond to emergencies. Last month the Pendle MP shocked the nation when he revealed statistics showing that thousands people are injured in accidents every year involving police cars answering 999 calls or in pursuits.

The MP unearthed the horrifying roll call of accident victims last month after Channel 4 news reader, Sheena McDonald, tragically hit the headlines in February when she was injured by a speeding police car when walking in Islington.

Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, told the Pendle MP that in 1997/8, no fewer than 2,123 people were injured and 15 killed by police cars answering emergencies. Now the Minister has told the Pendle MP that police chiefs are looking at a report which recommends tightening up the procedures and improving the training of police officers who sit behind the wheel.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "The Association of Chief Police Officers set up a working party to look into pursuit driver training and the group, led by the Deputy Chief Constable of Wiltshire, Rodney Lind, came forward last September with no fewer than 33 recommendations for action."

"They want to see a co-ordinated national approach to driver training and that's good. They want to see communication systems in police vehicles being able to be operated hands free and that makes sense. And they also want line managers to take more responsibility for the supervision and development of driving skills which should be reviewed annually through an appraisal

more follows

system. And, finally, they want forces to keep details of police drivers' accident history within a system which enables high risk drivers to be identified for review. These are all common-sense procedures and rules which should be implemented asap."

Note to Editors: Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, wrote to the Pendle MP on 9 April as follows: "Thank you for your letter of 17 March to Jack Straw about police vehicle accidents following up on your recent PQ,

"The conduct of police driver training is the responsibility of individual Chief officers Of police. I am aware that the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) takes these issues most seriously. Training is progressive and is designed to develop the skills of drivers so that they increase their awareness of the range of factors that affect their own training, their own capabilities, the characteristics of the vehicles they drive, and road and traffic conditions. Recommended procedures are designed, above all, to minimise the risks to members of the public.

"You have asked whether we plan to issue advise to Chief Constables on emergency response issues. In fact, the Home Office has assisted ACPO in considering training issues arising from police vehicles accidents by publishing the Police Research Group's " Study of Deaths and Serious Injuries Resulting from Police Vehicle Accidents" in 1997. The briefing sheet I have enclosed explains the main findings of the study and provides a contact number should you require the full text. It is interesting to note that

73% of police vehicles were travelling at speeds below the local speed limit for the area when the accident happened. The study examined the available data for 1990 to 1993 and was carried out with the active co-operation of ACPO Traffic Committee. The findings gave rise to a number of recommendations covering operational, training and administrative issues.

"The findings of the study supported on-going work by ACPO in reviewing and revising driver training. Police driver training is based on 'Road craft' a published manual available to the public, the ACPO police driving report of 1989, and the report of the Horner Working Group of 1995 on pursuits.

"In October 1996, ACPO set up a further Working Group to develop national core competencies for advanced and standard driving in the light of developments in vehicle and road design to assist in the construction of an appropriate training package and to review police pursuit driving training. The Working Group began by reviewing the recommendations of both the 1989 and 1995 reports, which it considered remained valid and largely reflected the needs of current police driving training. The Working Group published its report in September and Chief officers are considering the recommendations made.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 82/99 Tuesday 13 April 1999

MP TELLS GOVERNMENT TO STEP ON THE GAS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says it's time for the Government to move up a gear in its drive to get motorists to switch to natural gas fuel.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP quizzed Transport Minister, Glenda Jackson, asking her why the Government wasn't doing more to get compressed natural gas pumps on to filling station forecourts.

The MP told the Minister everyone welcomed the 29% reduction in fuel duty on gas announced in last month's Budget but said it would make little difference of people could not fill up their cars. The Minister said she was confident that the numbers of gas pumps would grow in future.

Speaking afterwards, Gordon Prentice said: "Natural gas vehicles have much cleaner exhausts than petrol or diesel, the fuel costs a lot less than the conventional alternatives and their is next to no loss of performance."

"The Government has done a lot already but we really need to get moving on natural gas vehicles. Because pumps are so few and far between, the main users are depot based vehicles such as buses and refuse vehicles. But once we get gas pumps on the forecourt, things could really take off."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 83/99 Wednesday 14 April 1999

PHOTOCALL - SATURDAY 17 APRIL 1.45pm AT BRIERFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE, BRIERFIELD.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to be presented with a 'Shining Star' badge by Pendle and District Multiple Sclerosis Society to mark the start of MS Awareness Week. This is the second year that the society has held the Awareness Week, which runs from 18 April to 24 April,
the aim of which is to increase understanding of Multiple Sclerosis. It coincides with a national campaign.

The Pendle group, which covers a wide area from Padiham to Earby, will be holding various events through the week including an information stand in the Arndale Centre in Nelson on Wednesday 21 April and a 'Cake break' at Brierfield Community Centre on Saturday 24 April.

Gordon Prentice, who is Secretary of the Parliamentary All Party MS Group and also Honorary President of the local branch said: "The local MS Society is doing a tremendous job. MS can affect people in a thousand different ways and we still have no clear idea why it strikes some people and not others. Tragically too often it hits people in the prime of life and we all want to raise money for further research. We are all hoping for a breakthrough."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 84/99 Wednesday 14 April 1999

PHOTOCALL - FRIDAY 16 APRIL 11.00am AT ELCS CAREERS OFFICE, 4A LEEDS ROAD, NELSON.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting Chief Executive of East Lancashire Careers Service, Ray Howard, staff and clients at the new Careers Office in Nelson this Friday. The office was relocated in February as the premises were no longer suitable. The new location will enable East Lancashire Careers Services to offer a better service to the young people of Pendle.

The ELCS offers a range of services including impartial guidance to young people to help them to make informed and realistic decisions about their future. The Employment and Training Advisers, based in the offices, advise them of appropriate opportunities and help them to make successful applications. The staff also involve parents by inviting them to attend careers interviews and careers events and by providing relevant information.

Gordon Prentice said: "ELCS provide an excellent service to the young people in Pendle. Their new premises offer up to date and comprehensive careers information, details of opportunities in further and higher education and details of local job and training."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 85/99 Thursday 15 April 1999

MP WANTS DEVELOPMENT AID TO BE TIED TO EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, wants the UK's overseas aid budget to be tied to programmes to provide education for girls and women. The MP quizzed International Development Secretary, Clare Short, on the steps she is taking to link development aid to education.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "In many parts of the world the education of girls is seen as a luxury they can't afford. The truth is, of course, exactly the opposite. If education is costly, the alternative - ignorance - is even more expensive in the long run."

The Minister told the MP: "We made clear in our White Paper in November 1997 that we are strongly committed to the international goals of universal primary education by 2015 and gender equity in primary and secondary education by 2005."

"In our bilateral programme we are supporting governments that give priority to the education of girls and women. We have committed over £200 million to basic education in a number of countries including Ghana, India, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh and our largest ever single education commitment of £67 million for Uganda."

"We are also working in the multilateral agencies to increase the commitment to girls and women's education. These and new programmes being developed reflect strong international evidence that investment in the education of girls is the single most effective way to reduce poverty."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 86/99 Monday 19 April 1999

PENDLE MP RENEWS CALL FOR ROOT AND BRANCH REFORM OF HOUSING BENEFIT SYSTEM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has renewed his call for a root and branch reform of the Housing Benefit system. In the Commons this afternoon, he told Social Security Minister, Angela Eagle, that Pendle's housing benefit bill had grown nine-fold in less

than a decade - from £1 million in 1990 to over £9 million last year - and that some landlords were making a killing from the system.

In response, the Minister told the House that a consultative Green Paper on the reform of housing benefit would be published later this year but that the Government was not going to rush into things. She said it was important to get it right “because we are talking about the roofs over people’s heads”.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: “The Green Paper is good news. I have been calling for action for many months. I am concerned about the amount of public money that is being tipped into the pockets of private landlords who, in some cases, do not maintain their properties adequately. The neglect can impact on the whole neighbourhood.”

The MP observed: “As we all know, in some areas of Pendle houses can be picked up for as little as £10,000 - £14,000 and in some cases for as low as £3,000. There are people who buy up large numbers of very cheap properties and then collect rent in the form of housing benefit probably at a minimum rent of around £65 per week. This would give a private landlord a return of a staggering 33% per year on a £10,000 property."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 87/99 Tuesday 20 April 1999

MPs CALL FOR MEETING WITH ROLLS ROYCE CHIEFS

Labour MPs representing constituencies around the country which are home to Rolls Royce plants, today will write to the company’s Chief Executive, John Rose, to ask for an urgent meeting on possible job losses. Workers from Rolls Royce plants around Britain converged on Westminster last Thursday (15 April) to lobby MPs about job losses recently announced by the company.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The meeting last week was very useful in defining the issues to be addressed. Only last year, the Government gave Rolls Royce £200m to help develop the hugely successful Trent family of engines. With a bulging order book and record profits, we all want to know why the company is embarking on this strategy. I hope for an early meeting.”

Note to Editors: RR Chief Executive, John Rose, wrote to the MP on 9 April: "As you say, the company's business strategy has produced a record order book, but our continuing success depends upon our ability to turn that order book into improved profitability to sustain the levels of investment to maintain our competitiveness. This means that we are always seeking to find ways to improve our productivity and cost effectiveness and our company-wide programme "Better Performance Faster" gives everyone a framework in which to contribute. Some of the improvements in productivity will involve changes in individual roles and some reduction in the number of people employed; there is also a need to recruit some specialist skills. Our approach has been to make severance terms selectively available on a voluntary basis and to invest in the retraining of people within the company to learn new skills, as well as recruiting trainees and people with capabilities we need. At Barnoldswick, we have announced potential job losses of 90 in our Fan Systems business and there has been continuing consultation with the trade unions to help minimise the particular impact of some deferments in customer delivery requirements. I hope this helps you to understand our approach which is to deal sensitively with the pressures arising from maintaining the company's competitive position in a challenging international marketplace.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 88/99 Tuesday 20 April 1999

MP BACKS BILL TO BEAM DIGITAL TV INTO PENDLE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a ten minute rule Bill, to be introduced in the Commons tomorrow by Norfolk North West MP, Dr George Turner, aimed at ensuring that the new digital television services reach every part of the UK. The Pendle MP is one of the sponsors of the Bill.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "It has bothered me for years that, at home in Barnoldswick, I cannot get Granada TV or BBC North West which cover events in Pendle. About a quarter of my constituents get their TV coverage from Yorkshire and, while I definitely don't want them to lose this, the new digital technology should allow them to get both. George tells me that many of his constituents in Norfolk can only pick up Yorkshire television!"

Prentice continued: "Yorkshire and the Leeds based broadcasters never cover anything in West Craven as they consider it outside their area. I remember the ludicrous situation at Christmas a couple of years ago when an E Coli outbreak in West Craven appeared on North West television - which isn't picked up in the area - and Yorkshire television ignored the outbreak."

Digital terrestrial television services were launched in the UK on 15 November last year. The plans allow for 81 transmission sites including the Winter Hill and Pendle Forest transmitters which will provide digital terrestrial television services to North

East Lancashire. Winter Hill has been broadcasting since the launch and Pendle Forest should be up and running next month - on 17 May.

The MP added: “Some parts of Pendle can get digital TV but I

more follows

MP BACKS BILL TO BEAM DIGITAL TV INTO PENDLE

want the benefits to get to every part. It is ludicrous that the new free digital services such as BBC Choice cannot get to Pendle people - including me!”

The MP said: "Pendle has been a broadcasting black hole for years. Lots of people still can’t get Channel 5. We all pay the same licence fee so I want to see the digital services rolled out across the UK as quickly as possible."

The Pendle MP has long warned that Digital Terrestrial Television and Digital Audio Radio could pass Pendle by. The first digital transmissions will only reach 60% of the UK population although eventually the transmissions should reach up to 90% of UK homes.

In 1996 he called for the cabling of West Craven which had been, and still is, neglected by the commercial cable companies. The original Pendle franchise excluded the West Craven area.

Note to Editors: Before the Broadcasting Act 1990, the Cable Authority specified an area to be covered, and it was a condition of the licence that a certain proportion of premises would be passed. The Cable Authority was abolished by the 1990 Act, and its functions taken over by the Independent Television Commission. The ITC permits operators to choose the nature and level of service they wish to offer the public. In response to expressions of interests from particular localities, the ITC draw up a map extending over a fairly wide area, not already covered by a cable franchise, which they intend to advertise. An applicant must then identify which parts the system will serve and if successful will be licensed to meet this commitment. There is no requirement to go beyond what is economically viable.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 89/99 Tuesday 20 April 1999

CITIZENS ALL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a proposal from Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to make the award of UK citizenship something really special. The MP says it should have greater significance and should be marked by a ceremony of some sort.

In a lecture on citizenship which the Home Secretary gave in Liverpool on 12 April Mr Straw said he was in principle in favour of such ceremonies. He told the Pendle MP today: “I have asked officials to look into the possibility of introducing them into the United Kingdom. Upon completion of their examination, I shall make a statement to the House.”

Gordon Prentice commented: “The award of UK citizenship is a significant event and it should be treated as such. Citizenship confers great privileges and brings responsibilities.”

The MP added: “We live in a global village where we are increasingly interdependent. But that does not mean to say the idea of citizenship is redundant. Far from it. Paradoxically, it acquires greater significance.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 90/99 Tuesday 20 April 1999

LORDS CONSIDER THEIR FATE

The House of Lords today begins detailed scrutiny of the Bill which will remove the automatic right of hereditary peers to a seat in Parliament says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster as the Lords prepare to countenance life at Westminster without them, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “Many Conservative peers have put down amendments to the Bill. But they failed to address any of the questions about the unrepresentative nature of the House of Lords for the whole of their 18 years in government. Instead, they preferred to use their huge hereditary majority to force through unpopular measures such as the poll tax, which did such damage to Pendle, and rail privatisation.”

“Even now, different parts of the Conservative party can't agree and are saying totally different things. The Tories are very late converts to reform and their "no stage one without stage two" line is a smoke screen for their confusion over whether hereditary peers should go or not.”

The MP added: “Conservative backing for reform is disingenuous, coming from a party that backed the hereditary peers even at the last election. As with so many other issues, William Hague's opportunism is causing confusion and splits in his own party.

“Labour promised to create a more modern and representative Parliament, and we are delivering on that pledge.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 91/99 Wednesday 21 April 1999

MPs DETERMINED TO PUT ASHDOWN ON THE SPOT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice has teamed up with colleague Phil Woolas, MP for Oldham East and Saddleworth to put Paddy Ashdown, leader of the Liberal Democrat Party, on the spot over the Lib/Dems contradictory policy on CCTV.

Phil Woolas lived in Pendle during his childhood and went to Nelson Grammar School and Nelson and Colne College and so still has an interest in local issues and he was astounded to hear from his colleague at Westminster, Gordon Prentice that the Lib/Dems in Pendle were actively opposing the introduction of CCTV for Pendle Town centres.

Phil Woolas said: “The Lib/Dems in Oldham have been supporting the introduction of CCTV and have constantly called for an extension of the Borough Council’s programme of CCTV.”

The MPs have sent a letter to Paddy Ashdown asking him to explain to them exactly what Lib/Dem policy on CCTV was.

Gordon Prentice said: “The Lib/Dems in Pendle are defying local public opinion which is overwhelmingly in favour of CCTV. They have consistently voted against any proposals the Labour Group on Pendle Council have put forward although their reasons for opposing it seem to change as often as the wind. Civil liberties, cost and the fact that they seem to think town centre crime is too trivial to warrant it are amongst the excuses so far used.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 92/99 Wednesday 21 April 1999

LABOUR COUNCILS TO LOBBY MINISTERS FOR SWIFT ACTION ON THE RIGHT TO ROAM

Rural Labour authorities agreed today to lobby collectively and individually for the promised Right to Roam legislation to be included in the next Queen's Speech in November 1999.

The decision followed a speech this morning by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, to the Labour Group of the Local Government Association's Rural Commission which represents 97 rural Labour controlled councils. The MP's private members' Bill on the Right to Roam is widely believed to have forced the Government to act.

Speaking to the LGA meeting at Kensington and Chelsea Town Hall, the Pendle MP said: "The Government is listening. Local authorities are key players in this forthcoming legislation and a strong message from them will be enormously valuable. Landowners do not always appreciate that citizens have rights too; the mere fact of ownership is not everything."

The MP continued: "Now that the principle of area access to over 4m acres of land in England and Wales which was previously off limits has been conceded by the Government, it is time to sit down with the landowners, the CLA, the NFU and others and chart a way forward that recognises the new reality. People will have new rights but they will have corresponding responsibilities. It is time to talk."

Notes to Editor: The LGA's Rural Commission represents over 200 local authorities in rural areas and the Labour Group represents 97 rural Labour councils. Cllr Christine Reid is chair of the Labour Group and can be contacted on 0973 540708. Other information from Margaret Ounsley, LGA Labour Group Office on 0171 664 3321

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 93/99 Thursday 22 April 1999

MP VISITS PRESTON AND DISTRICT KIDNEY PATIENTS ASSOCIATION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting the dialysis unit at the Royal Preston Hospital on Friday 23 April along with other North West MPs.
The group will have a tour of the unit followed by a meeting to discuss issues of concern to the association.

Gordon Prentice MP, who first visited the unit in 1997, said: "The dialysis unit at the hospital was opened in 1986 and the demand on the service has increased over the years. An extension is in the pipeline and the hospital are waiting for a commitment of funding from the Health Authority before they go ahead. Obviously the delay is causing frustration amongst staff and patients and we clearly need to get things moving."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 94/99 Thursday 22 April 1999

NO CHANGE IN PENDLE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The number of people in Pendle out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance last month stood at 1,647 - a workforce rate of 4.4% the same rate as in February. This is below the national average currently 4.6%.

1,231 men were unemployed and 416 women. There were 194 unfilled vacancies at the Job Centre in Nelson and 126 at Colne.

Gordon Prentice said: "Despite the difficulties facing manufacturing locally the unemployment figures are remaining stable. Nationally the claimant figure has risen very slightly and I am confident that the Government's welfare to work programme will ensure that unemployed people gain skills and access to jobs."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 95/99 Thursday 22 April 1999

MP PAINTS A PRETTY PICTURE!
PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE MP AT BARROWFORD PRE-SCHOOL, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE, WILTON STREET, BARROWFORD 10.30 am FRIDAY 23 APRIL 1999.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be painting a picture of a childhood memory at Barrowford pre-school as part of a campaign to give a higher profile to pre-schools. The picture will be put in a frame and displayed at the House of Commons and a panel of judges will choose the best painting with a special prize to go to the winning pre-school.

Gordon Prentice said: "Barrowford Pre-School has been established in the village for over 15 years and at present have 79 pre-school children on their register. Children can gain a tremendous amount by attending pre-school by providing quality early years care and education and I am happy to make my small contribution to their campaign."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 96/99 Thursday 22 April 1999

JURIES IN THE DOCK

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says more has to be done to understand why some juries bring in "not guilty" verdicts which fly in the face of all the evidence presented to them. In the Commons this afternoon, the MP told the Solicitor General it was astonishing that debriefing sessions do not take place "as a matter of course" between the Crown Prosecution Service and the barristers they instruct following acquittals where the pre-trial assessment by the CPS pointed to a high likelihood of conviction.

The Pendle MP said: "In my own view, sometimes the judge's summing up is woefully inadequate. Sometimes the prosecuting counsel are not up to scratch and do not present the case as cogently as they should. But in every case where the verdict is wholly unexpected, there should be a debriefing to try to understand what went wrong. There are instances where the prosecuting barristers pick up a case on the day of the trial itself. That is simply unacceptable."

The Solicitor General told the MP: "Cases should always be considered carefully so reasons for the acquittal can be established. In some cases the reasons are clear, where it is not, the CPS is sympathetic to having such meetings. The CPS routinely conducts an analysis of all acquittals in the Crown Court. A report is prepared by the caseworker who has attended court with counsel. This report is subsequently discussed with the police. In some circumstances, debriefing sessions with counsel are arranged in order to discuss the issues which have arisen. More generally, the CPS have been discussing with the Bar at a national level opportunities for obtaining more structured feedback from prosecuting counsel at specific stages in the process."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 97/99 Thursday 22 April 1999

MP WANTS MORE GAS GUZZLERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, wants to see more gas guzzlers on the road. He is stepping up his campaign to increase the number of vehicles adapted to run on environmentally friendly fuels such as Liquid Petroleum Gas and Compressed Natural Gas.

Following an exchange in the Commons earlier this month with Transport Minister, Glenda Jackson, the Minister told the MP today that she sees a big expansion in the number of filling stations offering alternative fuels.

The Minister told the MP: "There are an estimated 174 LPG refuelling points in the UK. Although these are generally open to the public, only about a dozen are sited on

retail forecourts. The number of LPG refuelling points is expected to increase to around 500 over the next three years with most of the new refuelling points sited on the forecourt. Refuelling points for compressed natural gas are predominantly depot based, though some permit third party access, There are around 30 fast-fill refuelling points in the UK suitable for fleet use and around 40 slow-fill refuelling points suitable for single vehicle refuelling. The number of fast-fill refuelling points is expected to double in the next year."

The Pendle MP added: "This is good news but we need to get across to the car manufacturers and the motorist the benefits of switching to alternative fuels. They are cheaper for a start!"

In the last Budget there was a 29% reduction in fuel duty on gas. But ten days ago in the Commons the MP told the Minister this would make little difference if people could not fill up their cars with "friendly fuels".

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 98/99 Monday 26 April 1999

JILL DANDO

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is stunned by the news today of the murder of the BBC broadcaster, Jill Dando, outside her Fulham home.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "It makes no sense at all. It is a terrible thing to happen. It is too awful for words."

"I know Fulham well. The idea that such a dreadful thing can happen in a quiet residential street in the middle of the day to someone who never caused anyone any harm is beyond my understanding."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 99/99 Monday 26 April 1999

NEW DIALYSIS UNIT PROMISED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is looking forward to the official announcement that the Renal Dialysis Unit at Preston Royal Infirmary is to be expanded to accommodate another 15 dialysis stations, benefiting around 60 patients.

The MP was speaking at Westminster after visiting the Unit last Friday (23 April) in the company of four other North West MPs (Peter Pike MP, Joan Humble MP, Gordon Marsden MP and Lindsay Hoyle MP) and Frank Clifford, Chair of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Community Health Council.

Gordon Prentice said: “Preston is important to us because it is the hub which serves East Lancashire. There are local outposts, so to speak, at Accrington and Pendle Community Hospital but patients are treated first at Preston before being moved out to the local hospitals. The expected commitment of £1.2m for the new extension to the unit as well as the money to run it is, quite simply, great news.”

The Pendle MP first visited the unit in 1997. He said: “The dialysis unit at the hospital was opened in 1986 and the demand on the service has increased over the years. It is badly needed and the go-ahead will cheer everyone up tremendously.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 100/99 Tuesday 27 April 1999

MP CALLS ON INDIA AND PAKISTAN TO SIGN TEST BAN TREATY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told a meeting in London last night that India and Pakistan should step back from the nuclear brink and sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The MP was speaking at a dinner held in honour of Raja Zulkuranan Khan, the adviser on Kashmir to the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The MP told the meeting that Britain, as the former colonial power, had a moral responsibility to help secure a settlement - but could not be expected to solve the problem on its own. “That is fanciful.”

He said: “Pakistan and India are now nuclear weapons states in their own right and the cost of the arms race in South Asia is impoverishing both countries. Kashmir could be the trigger for another war which could have cataclysmic consequences for all of us. Clearly, we in the West cannot forget about this conflict which has been festering for half a century.”

The Pendle MP has been pressing Ministers to make representations to the governments of India and Pakistan about the missile tests on 11th and 14th April. Yesterday, Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett told the Pendle MP: “We have expressed regret that India and Pakistan have chosen to conduct missile tests and continue to believe that restraint in developing nuclear weapons and delivery systems is in both countries' long-term interests. We welcome positive indications by both India and Pakistan that they will sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in time to allow entry into force by September this year.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 101/99 Tuesday 27 April 1999

MP SLAMS LAWYERS’ ADS

In its advertising campaign on the Access to Justice Bill in today's papers, the Law Society has resorted to irresponsible scaremongering says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine of Lairg has warned that through the adverts "many vulnerable people will be made to believe that they will lose their access to legal aid. That is just not true. In fact legal aid will still be available in precisely the types of cases raised by the Law Society in their adverts. I appreciate the concerns of solicitors

and their fear that change may affect their earnings. But the Government cannot be expected to protect every solicitor from change."

The Pendle MP added: “The government is determined to increase access to justice to everybody in society, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, through the creation of a Community Legal Service. The Access to Justice Bill will help achieve this aim and its passage through Parliament is the opportunity to debate and refine the proposals.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 102/99 Wednesday 28 April 1999

MP TELLS COMMONS: “DON’T DELAY DIGITAL TV!”

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Commons today that the new “information age” should not be allowed to pass his constituency by. In a lively and well informed debate on regional broadcasting anomalies - where viewers receive transmissions aimed at an area other than their own - the MP complained bitterly about the lack of action by broadcasters to resolve “little local difficulties”.

The MP said 25% of his constituents had never seen him on regional television because the West Craven part of Pendle gets broadcasts from Yorkshire. “I dare say this is a mixed blessing but there is a serious point here about how politics - especially local politics - is not reported on the broadcast media.”

The MP continued: “On May 6 - the day of the local elections - from my home in Barnoldswick I will be able to watch results coming in from Lincolnshire, Scunthorpe, Leeds and North Yorkshire. But I will not get results from the council that has the same boundary as my own constituency!”

The MP told the House his concerns extended beyond political coverage. He said an e coli outbreak in West Craven in December 1996 was covered by Granada and BBC North West - which cannot be picked up in many parts of West Craven - but not by Yorkshire and BBC Leeds - which can.

Speaking after the debate the MP said: “I am not prepared for us be viewed as country cousins - either in West Craven or in Pendle more generally. Too many people in my

area cannot get Channel 5 or hook up to the cable networks. And to cap it all, digital terrestrial television could pass us by unless we force the broadcasters to address the issue seriously."

more follows

MP SAYS PENDLE SHOULD GET DIGITAL TV NOW

Digital terrestrial television services were launched in the UK on 15 November last year. The plans allow for 81 transmission sites including the Winter Hill and Pendle Forest transmitters which will provide digital terrestrial television services to North East Lancashire. Winter Hill has been broadcasting since the launch and Pendle Forest should be up and running next month - on 17 May. But even then, the new digital transmissions will not reach many parts of West Craven including Barnoldswick and Earby.

The MP said: "In practical terms, this means people cannot subscribe to, say, **On Digital** in these areas."

Replying to the debate, the Culture, Media and Sport Minister Janet Anderson told MPs the Government is working to resolve regional reception anomalies. "We expect to say more on this before the summer recess."

The Pendle MP concluded: "TV is an incredibly important source of information for most people. 99% of the population watch TV and 87% of us watch TV at some point during the day."

Note to Editors: The following briefing note was sent to MPs by the BBC: Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) will cover 90% of the population by end of 1999, compared with 68% at end of 1998. The BBC is currently working with the ITC and other DTT service providers (including the transmission companies) to improve coverage of the current 81 digital terrestrial transmitters and to bring other multiplexes up to the standard of the BBC multiplex. Beyond this we are also working with them to estimate the investment required to extend DTT coverage beyond 90% (to both 95% and above). It is estimated that reaching 95% of the population will require the construction of a further 120 transmitters (on top of the current 81) costing at least as much again as the investment currently committed to reach 90%.

Given the costs involved in building additional transmitters, it is likely that an alternative method of securing universal coverage for BBC digital services would be advisable. To this end, the BBC has taken care to ensure that its services can be accessed via satellite without the need to take a pay service. Satellite transmission tends to be the best technology for reaching areas it is difficult and expensive to reach by cable and DTT (i.e. more hilly and more remote areas). Digital TV is a key part of the overall communications/knowledge revolution as TV, computer and telecommunications converge. Digital TV is a key part of the overall communications/knowledge revolution as TV, computer and telecommunications converge. The digital box/TV set is already a mini-computer linked to the phone/internet providing video, audio and text.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 103/99 Wednesday 28 April 1999

ROLLS ROYCE TELLS MP IT WILL USE "ALL AVAILABLE MEANS TO AVOID COMPULSORY REDUNDANCY" AT BARLICK

Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, has told local MP, Gordon Prentice, that "all available means are being employed to avoid compulsory redundancy" at the Barnoldswick plant. However, in his latest letter to the MP dated 27 April, he goes on to warn "that there can be no guarantee of complete success."

The letter is a follow up to an earlier one sent to the Pendle MP who has asked for a face to face meeting with company chiefs. A date has yet to be agreed. On 15 April workers from Rolls Royce plants around the country converged on Westminster to lobby MPs about the threatened job losses.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I am still mystified why the company should even be considering compulsory redundancies given its bulging order book and record profits. We all want Rolls to be an efficient, world class company - but we want it to be a good employer too."

Note to Editors: In his latest letter to the MP, the Rolls Royce Chief Executive writes: "The fast moving, competitive international environment in which we operate demands constant improvement to enable us to challenge our competitors and to attain our stated goal of being truly "worlds best'. The margins on our products are fixed at the point of sale so improved profitability is largely determined by the cost at which we make and deliver them. We are currently embarked on a wide range of cost reduction and efficiency measures throughout the company and regrettably, it is inevitable that this process will lead to some job losses."

"At Barnoldswick we have announced a potential 90 job losses in our Fan Systems business unit and discussions are underway with our employees and their representatives in order to try to minimise the adverse effects. A

more follows

voluntary severance and early retirement programme has been available
for some months now and we also invest in retraining and redeployment wherever it is possible. All available means are being employed to avoid compulsory redundancy but you will understand that there can be no guarantee of complete success."

"Redundancy is not something that the management of the company wants to undertake but it is forced upon us by the business climate in which we operate. The cost reduction and business efficiency programmes that are being introduced are aimed at producing the improved profitability and customer satisfaction which will lead to longer term job security for the majority of our employees."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 104/99 Thursday 29 April 1999

BLAIR'S WAY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is interviewed in a new Channel 4 documentary marking the second anniversary of Labour's 1997 General Election victory, to be screened this Sunday at 8pm.

Blair's Way
written and presented by Steve Richards

Channel 4
Sunday 2nd May 1999
8.00pm

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 104/99 Tuesday 4 May 1999

MP SLAMS "SHAMELESS' LIBERALS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is furious at Pendle's Liberal Democrats for claiming that Labour wants to build houses on an open green next door to Cravenside, an old folks home in the centre of Barnoldswick. The says there is not a single shed of truth in the allegation that is made in their local election "Focus" leaflet.

Speaking earlier today, the MP, who lives in the town, said: "I am well used to Liberal Focus leaflets with their shock horror headlines but this really takes the biscuit. The leaflet states as "fact" that "Labour want houses on the green around Cravenside". The leaflet lists Valley Gardens as an another area that Labour apparently wants to build over!"

The MP continued: "Over the years I have made many pleas for honest politics from the Lib Dems but these have fallen on deaf ears. These Focus leaflets must cause anxiety amongst those people who believe the claims they make. The plain fact is that Pendle council is run by the Liberal Democrats and they are the ones responsible for identifying and allocating housing sites."

The MP added: "The leaflet also claims Labour is saying Barlick's Civic Hall is to close. In Earby, the Lib Dems are saying the Conservatives wants to close the Community Centre - something hotly disputed by the well respected former Conservative full time agent, Ken Tennant. These allegations are utter nonsense."

"These Focus leaflets are quite shameless. They debase our local politics."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 107/99 Wednesday 5 May 1999

ARE YOU RECEIVING ME?

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is delighted that another local radio station will be coming to the Pendle area. The Radio Authority, which is responsible for licensing and regulating Independent Radio, will this week advertise the license to broadcast in Nelson, Colne and Burnley.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said: "I shall certainly be contacting the Radio Authority to let them have my views. I want to see the new station reaching as many people as possible in Pendle with a format that is friendly, newsy and accessible. Local radio should reflect the area it is licensed to cover."

Note to Editors: The Radio Authority (RA) writes: The RA is this week (7 May) advertising a new Independent Local Radio licence to serve the town of Burnley and the surrounding area, including Nelson and Colne, This licence is being offered for the provision of a service on the FM (VHF) waveband. The population coverage of the licence is expected to be up to around 175,000 adults (aged 15+). When the RA comes to assess the applications it receives, it will be taking into consideration applicants' proposals to cater for the tastes and interests of listeners in this local area. The RA would therefore welcome public comments and opinions about the local radio needs of the area, which should be sent to the Radio Authority, Holbrook House, 14 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5DG.

The licence will be for a period of eight years from the date the station comes on air. Anyone interested in applying for the licence should contact the Head of Development at the above address and ask for an application form. Applicants will be sent detailed notes of guidance to help them fill in the form. The closing date for receipt of applications is 7 September 1999. A non-refundable application fee of £750 will be payable. The Authority expects to decide and announce who has been granted the licence towards the end of the year. It will then be up to the successful applicant to get the radio station up and running as quickly as possible. The RA plans frequencies, awards licences, regulates programmes and advertising, and plays an active role in the discussion and formulation of policies which affect the Independent Radio industry and its listeners.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) - give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 108/99 Tuesday 4 May 1999

MP HAILS THE END OF "JUNK" FAXES

Consumers are now protected against unwanted direct marketing "junk" faxes and phone calls - to the delight of local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP - who sends out many hundreds of press releases by fax every year - has been a long time campaigner against junk faxes.

The MP said: "From today (4 May) companies who do not want to get unsolicited direct marketing faxes, and individuals who don't want to get unsolicited direct marketing phone calls, will be able to register with opt-out schemes, run by the Direct Marketing Association appointed by OFTEL."

The MP added: "People wishing to register with the opt-out schemes from 4 May should call:

0845 070 0707 for telephone preference registration; and

0845 070 0702 for fax preference registration

Direct marketing businesses should call 01932 414161 for an

information pack."

"My faxes at Westminster and in Pendle were creaking under the strain of churning out these junk faxes."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 109/99 Tuesday 4 May 1999

PAVEMENT POLITICS

The state of the nation's roads and pavements is a disgrace says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP was speaking at Westminster as transport minister Lord Whitty said years of under-investment in Britain's roads were being tackled head-on by the government.

The MP said: "When money is tight, road maintenance is often cut back in preference to more sensitive services. That is understandable but such a strategy only works for so long. Potholes can be a real threat to cyclists and motor cyclists in particular and poorly maintained pavements are an obvious hazard for the frail and the elderly."

The Minister spoke out following the publication of the 1998 National Road Maintenance Condition Survey. Lord Whitty said: "This Government recognises the problems that we have inherited.
We have had years of under-investment in our roads, and it shows. While the condition of the motorways and some rural roads is better than last year, the deterioration in urban roads cannot be allowed to continue."

"We are increasing spending on both national and local roads. Under the previous Government, total maintenance spending decreased by 8% over four years. We have reversed that decline, already increasing provision for 1999/2000 by 8%. But nobody should be fooled. Years of under-investment will not be turned around overnight."

Note to Editors: The highways maintenance SSA and the capital settlement for local road maintenance in 99/00 was increased by 34% over the 98/99 settlement to £242m. Ministers announced (7 April) another £25m for local road maintenance in both 00/01 and 01/02.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 110/99 Tuesday 4 May 1999

MP CALLS FOR SPEEDY REVIEW OF PROXY VOTING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is again pressing the Government to root out fraud in proxy voting. He is pressing for a speedy conclusion to the Home Office review which has been looking at electoral procedures.

The Pendle MP's move comes in the wake of renewed allegations that people in local elections have been duped into signing away their right to vote.

The MP said: "The integrity of the ballot lies at the very heart of our democracy. There is no place for people who fiddle the vote. I want to see very severe penalties indeed meted out to those who cheat."

The MP added: "The Government is to looking at the issue but I want to see some early action. I have written to Jack Straw so he is aware of my concerns."

A year ago this month, Home Office Minister, George Howarth, told the Pendle MP: "The Working Party on Electoral Procedures, which I chair, will be examining both proxy and postal voting. We will pay particular attention to the need to achieve a balance between accessibility and the prevention of abuse."

The working party is expected to forward its recommendations to the Home Secretary by the end of July.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 111/99 Tuesday 11 May 1999

A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES

The re-introduction of free eye tests last month will save 2,000 pensioners from developing glaucoma which, in its advanced form, leads to blindness.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, who has campaigned tirelessly for the scrapping of the controversial charges imposed by the previous Government, asked the Secretary of State for Health, what estimate he had made of the number of cases of glaucoma which were likely to be identified following the re-introduction of free eye tests for pensioners.

Health Minister, John Denham, told the MP: "We do not know how many people aged over 60 and over have already been
having regular sight tests or how many of the remainder will take up the opportunity of a free National Health Service sight test but, within these uncertainties, we estimate that optometrists could refer an additional 2,000 patients presenting signs of glaucoma."

The Pendle MP said: "There was never any doubt in my mind that the cost of an eye test put off many pensioners from having a regular check up."

Charges were introduced by the previous Conservative Government in 1988.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 112/99 Tuesday 11 May 1999

MP HITS OUT AT SCANDAL OF EMPTY HOMES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has hit out at what he calls "the scandal" of empty homes. Figures unearthed by the MP show that thousands of homes all over the country are waiting for people to move in.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "There is a great debate raging around us about where we are all going to live in the future as the number of households increases. Plainly, some of the growth could, quite literally, be accommodated in the thousands of houses lying empty. Some are well below modern standards and would cost a small fortune to put right. Others are in places where no-one wants to live. But thousands are up to scratch. We need to do all we can to bring them back into use."

The MP continued: “Across England, no fewer than 623,300 private sector and 81,700 local authority homes are empty.”

Vacant Housing: England. 1998

Council area	Council Stock vacancy	Council stock %	Social Landlord vacancy	Social Landlord %	Private Sector Stock	Private Sector %
Pendle	63	1.5	31	3.1	930	4.5
Blackbrn with Darwen	1,085	9.8	200	6.9	2,987	6.8
Burnley	368	6.6	131	8.6	2,559	7.7
Hyndbrn	128	3.3	58	4.7	1,960	6.6
England total	81,700	2.5	29,300	2.8	623,300	3.8

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 113/99 Wednesday 12 May 1999

MP TO MEET ROLLS ROYCE CHIEFS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, next month to discuss the implications of the company’s strategy which could mean 90 redundancies at the Barnoldswick plant.

Workers from Rolls Royce plants around Britain converged on Westminster in April to lobby MPs about the threatened job losses.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The meeting with John Rose and the Rolls Royce top management is important and I am hopeful we can make some progress. Only last year, the Government gave Rolls Royce £200m to help develop the hugely successful Trent family of engines. I didn’t expect this expression of support by my own Government to translate into job losses in my own town. The company is doing very well and profits have never been higher.”

Last month the Rolls Royce Chief Executive told the MP that “all available means are being employed to avoid compulsory redundancy” at the Barnoldswick plant.

Note to Editors: The meeting will take place on Monday 21 June at the company’s London HQ.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 114/99 Monday 17 May 1999

PENDLE PRIMARY SCHOOL GETS BEACON STATUS

St Mary's CE School in Newchurch in Pendle is to be awarded Beacon status. The announcement today was welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Schools Standards Minister, Estelle Morris, told the MP in a letter today that St Mary's had been selected as one of 125 new Beacon schools. The Minister said: "The next step for schools to take towards Beacon status is to complete a 'letter of agreement' which will set out the activities they will undertake, the funding that will be provided by DfEE and the terms and conditions of Beacon school status. Officials from the Standards and Effectiveness Unit will be in touch with schools shortly, with a view to reaching such agreements."

Today's announcement brings the total of Beacon schools to 200.
It is part of the Government's massive expansion of Beacon schools. As part of the Excellence in Cities proposals, the aim is 1000 Beacon schools by 2002. The Minister said: "The Government sees Beacon schools as a key part in its drive to raise standards. Our ultimate aim is a national Beacon network spreading and sharing good practice and innovation."

Note to Editors: Successful schools bid for up to £50,000, each year, for three years. Letters of agreement will specify the particular strengths the schools are expected to draw upon and the means they are to employ to spread their good practice. These methods include: seminars to teachers/governors from other schools; mentoring; work shadowing; provision of in-service training; consultancy; using the Internet to spread good practice; developing partnerships with Initial Teacher Training institutions/local schools/LEAs; release of teachers to other establishments; support for newly qualified teachers; preparation of curriculum planning materials; video documentation.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 115/99 Monday 17 May 1999

MP QUIZZES MARKS AND SPARKS CHIEF

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is set to quiz Marks and Spencer Chief Executive, Sir Richard Greenbury, on the future of Britain's textile and clothing industries. The boss of the retail giant is to meet the Pendle MP tomorrow.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "M&S is hugely influential and, even these days, much of what they sell is sourced from UK manufacturers. However, its is well known that the high street giant has been going through difficult times recently. I would like to see M&S get back to their long established policy of buying British wherever possible."

The Pendle MP, who is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Group, is a keen supporter of the textile industry. In March he met leader players from the world of textiles and fashion at a prestigious event at the Mansion House in the City of London. In his speech he appealed to designers, manufacturers and retailers to work together to produce the goods that people in the High Street wanted to buy - at a price they could afford.

Note to Editors: Textile workers from Pendle lobbied MPs at Westminster last November to press the case for textiles which still employs over 370,000 people, 10% of the UK's manufacturing work force. The lobby co-incided with the publication of the publication of the "Social Partners' Action Plan for Clothing and Textiles" - drawn up by the British Apparel and Textile Confederation and the three main trade unions which organise in the industry - the T&G, KFAT and the GMB.

UK textiles production is worth over £17 billion with roughly half produced in the clothing and knitwear sectors and the other from the textile sector. The UK ranks fourth in Europe in terms of the value of textile goods produced.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 116/99 Tuesday 17 May 1999

MP BACKS BEACON COUNCILS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today backed Government proposals to create new "Beacon" councils whose innovative ways of working could provide an inspiration to others. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "We can always learn from the best councils and I hope my own authority of Pendle will seriously consider sharing its best practice with others."

The MP added: "Councils are close to the lives of all of us and if they are doing their job well then we should say so - and give credit where credit is due."

Note to Editors: The Local Government Minister, Hilary Armstrong wrote to the Pendle MP today as follows: "Earlier this year we published our Prospectus, *The Beacon Council Scheme: How will it work?* There was a broad welcome for the scheme. We are now inviting councils to apply for beacon status for the 1999-2000 programme. The application brochure sets out the rules of the scheme, how to apply and how beacon status will be awarded. As well as answering key questions in their application, short listed applicants for beacon status will need to demonstrate their best practice to our independent advisory panel.

In this first year of the scheme, beacon status will be awarded to councils for excellence in seven key service and cross-cutting service areas, They have been selected for the difference they make to people's quality of life and to the community as a whole. We are seeking applications for beacon status from those councils which can demonstrate excellent performance, and can share experience effectively, in the following service areas:

- community safety: preventing local shopping and town centre crime and disorder
- education: helping raise standards by tackling school failure
- housing: improving housing maintenance
- modernising planning: streamlining planning decisions for business
- modern service delivery: improving housing and council tax benefit administration
- social services: helping care leavers

more follows

MP BACKS BEACON COUNCILS

- sustainable development: dealing with waste

By awarding beacon status we will recognise excellent performance and enable all councils to learn from the experiences of the best. In selecting beacon councils we will aim to ensure a good geographical spread, a spread which is representative of the diversity of local government and a spread across the different service and crosscutting service areas chosen for beacon status. The national programme of events to be co-ordinated by the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government will then enable best practice to be spread across the country.

Councils which can demonstrate excellence in any of the service areas selected this, year, and believe they have something others could learn, should now apply."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 117/99 Tuesday 18 May 1999

MP CALLS FOR TOUGH ACTION ON AIRCRAFT FLYING WITH LOW FUEL LEVELS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for tough new action on airlines who allow their aircraft to enter UK airspace with insufficient fuel to cope with an emergency. The MP's concerns were prompted by recent reports that a Malaysian airlines 747 had flown across London on its flight path to Heathrow with insufficient fuel on board.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Transport Minister, Glenda Jackson, told me today that over the past two years there were 12 reports of aircraft arriving at UK airports with fuel levels below the prescribed minimum. This is shocking and totally irresponsible behaviour on the part of a number of airlines. The consequences of an aircraft running out of fuel when high above an urban area simply do not bear thinking about. And what do the pilots think? They know their planes are not going to run on fresh air."

In her Parliamentary answer, the Minister told the MP: "The international standard for minimum fuel levels is contained in Annex 6 to the Chicago convention. This requires that an aircraft should arrive at its destination airport with enough fuel to make an approach to land, carry out a missed approach, fly to an alternate airport, hold for 30 minutes and carry out the subsequent approach and landing. The aircraft should also carry a contingency reserve specified by the relevant national aviation authority. The breaching of minimum fuel levels does not immediately place an aircraft in danger."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 118/99 Wednesday 19 May 1999

MP HAILS PLAN TO ROPE IN THE COWBOY BUILDERS

Plans to tackle the problem of cowboy builders have been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice. The Construction Minister Nick Raynsford said today that a new "quality mark" would help people choose their builders.

The Minister said: "This initiative is also very much in the interests of the respectable builders who suffer from the behaviour of the cowboys."

The Pendle MP added: "Over the years, I have heard tales of the most appalling botched up building jobs - and the dreadful stress and strain of securing an adequate remedy. People in Pendle as elsewhere need protection from the small minority of rogue builders who couldn't use a trowel if you asked them."

The proposed new quality mark will be simple for consumers to understand and affordable for smaller builders. At the same time it will guarantee standards so that it makes a real difference; the quality mark must be seen by consumers to be independent, reliable and fair so that only the cowboys are excluded.

Note to Editors: The Government set up the Cowboy Builders Working group in July 1998 to carry forward the main proposals of
DETR's consultation paper "Combating Cowboy Builders". In particular
it was charged to look at the ideas of a quality mark and an approved
list of reputable builders and constructors. It issued its interim report for consultation on 9 April 1999. The consultation ends on 2 July and the Working Group is due to submit its final report by the end of July.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 119/99 Wednesday 19 May 1999

FLYING THE FLAG

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says it's time for the flag to be lowered on the ancient title of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

At Cabinet Office questions today, the Pendle MP asked the Chancellor of the Duchy - the so-called "enforcer" Jack Cunningham - if he was "proud or slightly embarrassed to be the only Cabinet Minister with his own flag!" The MP went on to describe the Duchy as a "complete anachronism" which should be abolished. He said

it was quite wrong for magistrates to be appointed by Dr Cunningham rather than the Lord Chancellor, the person responsible for appointments in the rest of the country.

Dr Cunningham admitted that the Duchy has its own flag - but he confessed he doesn't fly it from his official car as one of his Conservative predecessors had.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "The Duchy is a bizarre throwback to medieval England. It really should feature in history books rather than current political and administrative practice."

Note to Editors: The history of the Duchy of Lancaster goes back to the 13th century. Since 1399 this estate passed to each reigning monarch with the Duchy revenues providing a source of income separate from other Crown inheritances. This separate identity was preserved when in 1760 George III surrendered the revenue from the Crown Estates to the Government in exchange for the Civil List but retained the Duchy of Lancaster revenues. Justices of the Peace are appointed on behalf of the Queen by the Lord Chancellor, except in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire where appointments are made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Lord Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Duchy make approximately 1700 appointments to the magistracy each year.

For Immediate Release. No 120/99 Wednesday 19 May 1999

PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE MP AT HOLY SAVIOUR RC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HOLLAND PLACE, NELSON AT 11.00am FRIDAY 21 MAY 1999.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting Holy Saviour School in Nelson this Friday to meet the staff and pupils and see first hand the work of the school.

The MP said: "I always enjoy my visits to local schools, the children have a refreshing point of view on all sorts of diverse subjects."

For Immediate Release. No 121/99 Wednesday 19 May 1999

BBC 2 "DESPATCH BOX" - Monday 24 May

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be appearing on the BBC's late night political discussion programme "Despatch Box" at midnight on Monday 24 May to talk about the modernisation of the House of Commons. The programme is broadcast on BBC 2.

On Monday 24 May the Commons will be debating the Modernisation Committee's latest report on "Westminster Hall" - a proposal to set up a "parallel chamber" for the House of Commons allowing important issues which are rarely debated in the Commons through lack of time to be aired in Westminster Hall. These may include Royal Commission reports, Law Commission and Green Paper proposals. Any contentious matters where a vote might be called would be a matter for the Commons itself.

The Pendle MP is a member of the Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons.

For Immediate Release. No 122/99 Tuesday 25 May 1999

MP WANTS BLACK BOXES IN ALL POLICE VEHICLES

Campaigning Labour MP, Gordon Prentice, is stepping up his campaign to get black boxes - an "on the ground" version of the flight recorders used by airlines - fitted in all police vehicles. The MP says he hopes the Lancashire Constabulary takes the lead in the North. Since the Pendle MP highlighted the issue, the Metropolitan police has started to install the devices.

Last month the MP called for the immediate implementation of new rules covering the way police drivers respond to emergencies. In March the Pendle MP shocked the nation when he revealed statistics showing that thousands people are injured in accidents every year involving police cars answering 999 calls or in pursuits. In 1997/8, no fewer than 2,123 people were injured and 15 killed by police cars answering emergencies.

The MP has now urged Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, to encourage Chief Constables to follow the lead given by the Met police. The Minister told the MP: "It is an operational matter for the Chief Officer of police to decide whether to fit recording equipment. I understand that the Metropolitan Police Service has decided to fit such a device in many vehicles as a management tool to promote their economical and proper use. If any of these were to be involved in an accident, the equipment would be able to provide independent evidence of the vehicle's speed. I am sure that other forces will be taking a close interest in the Metropolitan Police approach."

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "The sooner these black boxes are routinely installed in all police vehicles the better."

For Immediate Release. No 124/99 Wednesday 26 May 1999

ROCKY ROADS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing for tough new regulations to ensure that rock and aggregates from old redundant roads are recycled to help make new ones.

The MP said: "I want to see all Government and local authority contracts for roads and other building works specify the use of a certain percentage of recycled material. An example on our own doorstep shows what can be done. The new roundabout at the junction of the A59 and A56 used material from the old road which has now disappeared off the face of the map."

The MP continued: "Unfortunately there is no comprehensive statistical source which shows the progress we are making on recycling road material. However, a survey by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) a few years ago found that in the UK 90% of reclaimed asphalt and 75% of concrete derived from old road pavements were recycled, but not necessarily for use in roads. That's good but we can do better."

The MP added: “I am also pressing the Government to look at using old car tyres as a road surface. This is an excellent way of getting rid of the mountain of old tyres which go into landfill at the moment or are incinerated. We need to think laterally about these things.”

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP is Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Roads Group

For Immediate Release. No 125/99 Wednesday 2 June 1999

MP TELLS HIGH STREET TO BUY BRITISH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging the Government to help sustain the UK textile industry which has been battered by decades of competition from cheap overseas producers. The MP wants UK retailers, wherever possible, to buy their clothing and textiles from UK manufacturers.

The MP pressed Industry Minister John Battle following the Pendle MP’s meeting last month with Marks and Spencer Chairman, Sir Richard Greenbury. M&S has come under sustained criticism for sourcing an increasing percentage of their merchandise from overseas. After the meeting with Sir Richard, the MP said all the big UK retailers were increasingly relying on non UK manufacturers yet M&S was being singled out and crucified for doing the same.

Industry Minister, John Battle told the Pendle MP: “Sourcing decisions are, of course, for retailers themselves to take, based upon their own commercial judgement. However, my Department is involved in a number of initiatives designed to promote the competitiveness of UK textiles and clothing manufacturers, as well as the efficiency of the UK supply chain. For instance, in February this year I was pleased to announce that the DTI would be providing the secretariat for the Textiles & Clothing Strategy Group, a joint industry - union initiative to consider how best to ensure the sustainable development of the UK's textile and clothing industry. The retail sector is represented on that Group.”

The Minister went on: “In addition, the DTI is a co-sponsor of the "Apparel & Textiles Challenge", a joint initiative with retailers and manufactures to improve relationships in, and management of, the clothing and textile supply chain. Developments such as E-

more follows

BUY BRITISH

Commerce, internet and mail order selling, demand ever shorter delivery times and necessitate a quick response service from manufacturers which UK suppliers are well placed to meet.”

The Pendle MP added: “People *will* pay a premium for quality. We can never hope to match the costs of production in some of the developing countries overseas but we can and do make some of the highest quality clothing anywhere in the world. Couple that with our style and design talents and we should be on to a winner.”

Last November a big contingent of textile workers from Pendle lobbied MPs to press the case for textiles which still employs over 370,000 people, 10% of the UK's manufacturing work force. UK textiles production is worth over £17 billion with roughly half produced in the clothing and knitwear sectors and the other from the textile sector. The UK ranks fourth in Europe in terms of the value of textile goods produced.

The Pendle MP is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Carpet Group.

For Immediate Release. No 126/99 Wednesday 2 June 1999

MP WELCOMES ACTION ON FUEL POVERTY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the publication of the new consultation paper 'Fuel Poverty: The New Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) - a programme for warmer, healthier homes.'

Speaking from his constituency office the MP said: "A staggering 4.3 million households experience some degree of fuel poverty and have to make choices between being warm or sacrificing spending on other pressing priorities. Because of this unacceptable situation, the Government has decided to do more to the challenge posed by fuel poverty by building on the achievements of the current HEES."

Specifically the new HEES will provide a package of insulation and/or heating improvement measures for households in receipt of an income or disability based benefit.

Gordon Prentice said: "Here in Pendle we have a lot of old housing which can be cold, damp, draughty and difficult to keep warm. Many of these households contain members who are vulnerable to these conditions because they are very young or very old, disabled or sick. The new HEES Scheme could deliver huge benefits to these people and I welcome this consultation paper."

Note to editor: The new packages will be adapted to the specific characteristics of the property. It is proposed to increase the present grant maximum of £135 to £700. For an average three-bedroomed semi-detached property, these packages will reduce heating costs by up to £600 per annum depending on the energy efficiency of the property prior to improvement. Comments are invited on the consultation paper to be made by 16 July 1999. The Government's aim is to have the new programme in place by April 2000.

For Immediate Release. No 127/99 Wednesday 2 June 1999

MP URGES PAKISTAN AND INDIA TO PULL BACK FROM KASHMIR FLASH POINT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice today urged Pakistan and India to pull back from war over the future of the disputed territory of Kashmir. Over recent days, tension has

heightened as Indian Warplanes have been shot down after reportedly straying into Pakistan air space.

The MP was speaking as Foreign Office Minister Tony Lloyd was meeting the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, in London today (2 June).

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: “I speak as a good friend of Pakistan who desperately wants to see the Kashmiri people allowed to decide their own future - but I also want to see India and Pakistan pull back from the brink. Now they are both nuclear weapons states, they can start by signing the Comprehensive Test Ban treaty.”

The MP added: “There are no winners in a nuclear war. Life can never be the same again as water, earth and the air are all contaminated. It is a chilling fact that there are upland areas here in the UK which are not allowed to be used for grazing livestock because the ground is still contaminated by the fall-out following the meltdown at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Ukraine.”

The Foreign Office Minister had earlier told the MP: “We continue to urge both Pakistan and India to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.”

For Immediate Release. No 128/99 Wednesday 2 June 1999

IT’S QUIDS IN FOR CYRIL says MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, was delighted when former Walverden Labour Councillor Cyril Hughes told him that his bill for stamp duty first issued at a staggering £600 has now been reduced to a more affordable £60.

The MP said “Cyril first got in touch with me in February of last year when he moved from Nelson to Lytham St. Annes. He received a bill from the Inland Revenue of £646 for Stamp Duty. After picking himself off the floor he challenged this through his solicitor was told that the calculations for this amount were based on a possible increase on ground rent payable over 125 years. Cyril wrote to me and I looked into the matter on his behalf. Following my intervention, I was delighted when he rang this week to say that in the light of recent legal advice given to the Inland Revenue the treatment of these leases for Stamp Duty is to be changed.”

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Patricia Hewitt, has announced that the Inland Revenue have reviewed their practice in relation to the Stamp Duty treatment of new leases under which futurerent levels are expressed to be dependent on future movements in an index such as the Retail Prices Index (RPI).

The change in practice, based on recent legal advice, means that in general less Stamp Duty will be payable in these cases. Many people who have paid Stamp Duty on such leases under the current basis will be entitled to a repayment. The new basis takes effect immediately.

Note to editor: 1. Stamp Duty on a new lease is based on 2 elements of payment - the initial payment (premium) and the rent. Any premium is treated like a sale price and attracts Duty at the standard scale if it is over £60,000 (1%, 2% and 3% in 1998/99). And the average annual rent bears duty at between 1% and 24%, depending on the terms of the lease. 2. If the annual rent exceeds £600 then the premium loses the advantage of the £60,000 threshold. This is in order to discourage artificial fragmentation of property deals which are close to the threshold.

more follows

IT'S QUIDS IN FOR CYRIL says MP

3. When a fixed cash sum for instance is stated as the rent to be paid over the term of the lease then there is no difficulty in determining the average rent over the life of the lease. But if the lease specifies that the rent for future years will increase in line with an external index such as the Retail Price Index the mechanism for uprating the rent with respect to that index was not as clear as it should be. Hence today's change. 4. In future where rent reviews are to be based on an external index such as the RPI only any change in the RPI up to the date of the execution of the lease will be taken into account for Stamp Duty. 5. In most cases this will result in the average rent being little more than the initial rent. 6. Under Stamp Duty law, repayments of excess duty are made by adjusting the stamps impressed on the document, so as to reflect the correct amount due.

For Immediate Release. No 129/99 Thursday 3 June 1999

LIB DEM ELECTION LEAFLET 'SHOULD HAVE BEEN PULPED' says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is furious with the Liberal Democrats for issuing a false and misleading leaflet for the European Parliament elections in a week's time. The leaflet is being distributed free by the Post Office as the Lib Dems official election communication.

The glossy leaflet features Paddy Ashdown and former MP Cyril Smith on the front and trumpets on the reverse that "Liberal Democrats campaign across the region, running major councils like Liverpool, Stockport and Pendle."

Speaking from his home in Barnoldswick earlier today, the incandescent MP said: "These leaflets are being distributed all over the North West - to millions of households and they contain a glaring lie. Pendle Council is not run by the Liberal Democrats. In fact, a month ago they were comprehensively trounced, losing 7 seats and hanging on to three others by margins of 1, 9 and 16 votes. Their local leader said they lost the election!"

The MP added: "The local elections were a month ago. Any self respecting political party with an ounce of integrity would have pulped these mendacious leaflets. Instead they carry on as if the facts don't matter in an election campaign. Election leaflets, by their very nature, are designed to influence people - but you don't do that by lying about the facts."

The MP is to raise the matter with the regional returning officer for the North West. He is also writing to Paddy Ashdown. The MP added: "This leaflet should not be distributed in its present form."

For Immediate Release. No 130/99 Wednesday 2 June 1999

MP APPLAUDS FIRST YEAR OF THE NEW DEAL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pleased with the favourable impact of the New Deal on thousands of young people's lives. The New Deal is part of the Government's welfare to work strategy. It is designed to help people who have been out of work for 6 months or more, and who are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, to get a job and thus enhance their future employability.

The MP, speaking from his constituency office, said: "The New Deal has made a promising start in its first full year giving new opportunities and help to young people. The options available on the New Deal mean that there is no reason why anyone who is young, fit and healthy should be on benefit for long periods."

He continued: "The second year of the New Deal starts with an optimism built on the achievements of the first year. The programme was initially for those aged 18-24 but was extended to those aged 25 and over from June 1998 and we can all be heartened in the knowledge that already 10,500 of the long-term unemployed have moved into jobs."

Note to editor: 1. Nearly 70,000 young people who were previously unemployed for 6 months or more moved into sustained jobs of which 56,000 were unsubsidised jobs and over 13,000 subsidised. 2. Over 64,000 received training or work experience to improve their employability with 12,400 on the Environment Task Force, 13,100 on the Voluntary Sector Option and 39,100 in Full Time Education and Training. 3. The total number of 18-24 unemployed claimants is at the lowest level since July 1974.

For Immediate Release. No 131/99 Thursday 3 June 1999

LEAFLET ROW GOES TO THE TOP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has this morning written to Lib/Dem leader, Paddy Ashdown, demanding a correction slip is inserted into the Party's official European Parliamentary election leaflet which is currently being delivered by the Post Office to millions of households across the North West.

The leaflet claimed that the Liberal Democrats are running major councils like Liverpool, Stockport and Pendle. On 6 May the Liberal Democrats lost overall control of Pendle.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "By their very nature, election leaflets are designed to persuade people and millions of voters across the North West are being told that the Liberal Democrats are running Pendle council

when a month ago the voters gave them a bloody nose. It's as if the verdict of the people a month ago hardly matters. So far as the Lib/Dems are concerned, why let the facts get in the way of a good story?"

The MP's letter to the Liberal Democrat leader is attached.

For Immediate Release. No 132/99 Friday 4 June 1999

PHOTOCALL: Gordon Prentice MP will be visiting La Petite Ecole, Edmondson Street, Barnoldswick at 11am today, Friday

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be continuing his constituency wide programme of visits to local childcare providers when he drops in on La Petite Ecole this morning at 11am.

He will be met by Mr Peter Whiteside, the manager of the nursery.

The visit falls in National Childcare Week (30 May - 6 June).

Last Friday, the MP opened the new conservatory extension to the nursery at Nelson and Colne College.

For Immediate Release. No 133/99 Tuesday 8 June 1999

PUBLIC TO GET ACCESS TO POLLUTION DETAILS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, won an assurance from Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, this evening when he was told that people would have access to public registers setting out the steps companies are taking to comply with new "Integrated Pollution Control" processes designed to cut pollution dramatically.

The MP was speaking during the second reading of the Pollution Prevention and Control Bill which brings a European wide directive into UK law.

After the exchange the MP said: "The public has the right to know what is coming out of the chimneys at industrial sites. And I don't want firms to shelter behind spurious claims of "commercial confidentiality".

The MP added: "The best disinfectant is sunlight. We need to get the daylight into all these dark corners. Openness and transparency is always the best policy."

The MP has long campaigned for full information on emissions from companies such as Castle Cement in Ribble Valley, next door to his Pendle Constituency.

For Immediate Release. No 134/99 Tuesday 8 June 1999

SALTERFORTH PRIMARY GETS NEW CLASSROOM

Salterforth primary School has been given the go-ahead to build a new classroom says the County's Education Chair, Hazel Harding. In January, after visiting the school, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, backed a new bid for extra accommodation. The school, he said, was bulging at the seams.

In her letter to the MP, Cllr Harding says: "You will recall that the school PTA had raised £17,000 towards the provision of a mezzanine classroom in the hall. It has proved possible for the Authority to exceptionally match this amount which will enable the project to go ahead during the summer vacation. This has not been an easy situation to resolve, particularly given the financial constraints on the Authority, and hopefully the pupils and staff at Salterforth will very soon benefit from improved teaching conditions."

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is great news. The school raised a small fortune and the fact that the LEA is pitching in with cash is music to my ears." The MP visited the school on 8 January when he was given an audio-visual presentation led by the Chair of Governors, Peter King, and the Head, John Kelly.

Note to Editors: His letter dated 11 January to the Education Secretary, the Pendle MP wrote: "As you will know, Salterforth County Primary School was inspected by OFSTED in October last year and received a very positive report. This reinforces my impressions of the school, which is well run and managed and acts as a focus for the local community. Unfortunately, there is the most dreadful overcrowding and this was specifically picked up by the Inspectors in their Report. Because the children are literally on top of each other, it is very difficult to do creative work and to keep the children concentrating on the task at hand. Children are crammed into tiny class rooms and have to stream past other children at work in the main hall which doubles as another classroom, in order to get to the toilet."

For Immediate Release. No 135/99 Tuesday 8 June 1999

MP MEETS MINISTER TO DISCUSS KASHMIR CRISIS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Foreign Office Minister, Geoff Hoon, tomorrow (9 June) to discuss the worsening crisis in Kashmir.

Speaking before the meeting, the MP said: "What is happening in Kashmir has been pushed off the front page as a result of the Balkans war. But Kashmir is - and always will be - a powder keg until this festering 50 year old conflict is settled once and for all."

"Geoff Hoon has been appointed to the South Asia portfolio following the tragic death of my good friend Derek Fatchett who had the rare quality of being able to bring people together."

"A lot of people will be looking to Geoff to help bridge the divide over the future of Kashmir."

Note to Editors: Last week the MP urged Pakistan and India to pull back from war over the future of the disputed territory of Kashmir. Over recent days, tension has heightened as Indian Warplanes have

been shot down after reportedly straying into Pakistan air space. The MP spoke out as Foreign Office Minister Tony Lloyd was meeting the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, in London on 2 June.

For Immediate Release. No 136/99 Wednesday 9 June 1999

MP CALLS FOR AN END TO STALEMATE IN KASHMIR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, this morning told Foreign Office Minister Geoff Hoon that the UK Government must "strain every sinew" to end the stalemate in Kashmir.

The Minister told the MP that India and Pakistan were two sovereign states - but, because of the special relationship Britain has with both countries, the UK is ready and willing to try and broker a settlement. The Minister said both countries - now nuclear weapons states - had peered over the precipice and drawn back and were now in dialogue.

Speaking after the meeting, the Pendle MP said: "Bi-lateral talks between India and Pakistan will not resolve this issue. That is a plain fact of life. But there will not be peace in the region unless and until a solution to the Kashmir issue is found."

The MP added: "On a practical level, I want to see all allegations of human rights abuses monitored and collated and verifiable information produced which would allow the international community to act. I want both countries to sign up immediately to the Test Ban Treaty outlawing further nuclear explosions. There should be confidence building measures - getting academics and business people and others networking across the border."

"We need to promote trade between the two. Only 1% of Pakistan trade is with India - its next door neighbour. Here in the UK, 60% of our trade goes to our neighbours in continental Europe. Finally, there can be no question of permanent membership of the UN Security Council for India until a settlement is found on Kashmir."

For Immediate Release. No 137/99 Wednesday 9 June 1999

RADIOACTIVE FALL OUT IN THE NORTH WEST - 13 YEARS AFTER CHERNOBYL

Radioactive fall out from the Chernobyl nuclear reactor is still present in the North West - 13 years after the cataclysmic meltdown. Information unearthed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, reveals that in the UK, the Ribble Estuary, North Wales, Cumbria and the South of Scotland are still affected by the deposition of radioactive material - mainly Caesium 137.

The Pendle MP asked Agriculture Minister Jeff Rooker what assessment he had made of when all upland grazing areas in the United Kingdom would be free of contamination from the fall-out from Chernobyl.

The Minister told the MP: “Regular assessments are made of radiocaesium levels in sheep in affected areas to determine the prospects for removing controls and further reducing the areas subject to restrictions.”

“Whilst generally declining, radiocaesium from the Chernobyl accident is still present in some upland areas in the United Kingdom. The rate of decline is dependent on the complex interaction between such factors as soil type, vegetation, weather, drainage and grazing preference. Consequently it is not possible to specify a time at which all these areas will be free of Chernobyl contamination.”

The Pendle MP commented: “Chernobyl is half way round the globe yet we are still picking up radioactive traces here in the UK. Nuclear technology needs to be handled with tremendous care.”

For Immediate Release. No 138/99 Wednesday 9 June 1999

MP WELCOMES MOVE TO BOOST ROLE OF UN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves by the UK Government to increase the size and representative nature of the UN Security Council.

The MP asked Foreign Office Minister, Tony Lloyd, if the Government wanted to see changes made to the UN Security Council which has such an important role in world affairs.

Foreign Office Minister Tony Lloyd told the Pendle MP: “The Government supports early enlargement of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories. It supports the addition of five permanent seats: one each for Germany and Japan, and three for developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. It also supports the addition of up to four non-permanent seats, making an expanded Council of 24.”

The Pendle MP said: “The Security Council needs a shake up to reflect the realities of the modern world. Given what has happened in the Balkans and in other trouble spots around the world, we need a vigorous United Nations, willing, able and determined to uphold the rule of international law.”

He added: “The change which the British Government is now seeking is long overdue.”

For Immediate Release. No 139/99 Friday 11 June 1999

LANDLORDS TO MEET MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet representatives of local landlords this evening (Friday) to discuss housing problems facing the area. Stung by his criticism of some private sector landlords, the East Lancashire Landlords Association invited the outspoken MP to meet them and talk about his concerns.

Speaking from his constituency office before tonight's meeting, the MP said: "Some of the housing in Pendle is an absolute disgrace and it's time for straight talking about what we are going to do about it."

Last month, the MP hit out at what he called "the scandal" of empty homes. Figures unearthed by the MP show that thousands of homes all over the country are waiting for people to move in.
Across England, no fewer than 623,300 private sector and 81,700 local authority homes are empty. In Pendle, 930 private sector and 63 public sector homes are empty.

The MP has also outraged landlords by saying they can make a small fortune from the public purse from renting out slum properties - a return in some cases of 33% per year on a £10,000 property. In April he told the press he was concerned about the amount of public money that was being tipped into the pockets of private landlords who, in some cases, do not maintain their properties adequately. The neglect, he said, can impact on the whole neighbourhood.

Note to Editor: Housing Benefit is non-contributory, income related and tax free. It is administered by local authorities with a caseload of 4.8m costing £11.6 billion. The Housing Benefit system as it stands has resulted in a major expansion of the private rented sector in Pendle during the 1990s. Pendle's Housing Benefit bill has risen from £1 million in 1990 to over £9 million in the current year.

more follows

LANDLORDS TO MEET MP

In April, the Housing Minister, Angela Eagle, told the MP that a consultative Green Paper on the reform of housing benefit would be published later this year but she added that the Government was not going to rush into things. She said it was important to get it right "because we are talking about the roofs over people's heads".

Note to Editors 2: Vacant Housing: England. 1998

Council area	Council Stock vacancy	Council stock %	Social Landlord vacancy	Social Landlord %	Private Sector Stock	Private Sector %
Pendle	63	1.5	31	3.1	930	4.5
Blackbrn with Darwen	1,085	9.8	200	6.9	2,987	6.8
Burnley	368	6.6	131	8.6	2,559	7.7
Hyndbrn	128	3.3	58	4.7	1,960	6.6
England total	81,700	2.5	29,300	2.8	623,300	3.8

For Immediate Release. No 140/99 Thursday 10 June 1999

A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, was horrified to learn the amount of medicines that go wasted after being prescribed. The staggering total of nearly five tonnes of unwanted medicines were disposed of through community pharmacies in East Lancashire between November 1997 and October 1998. The MP learnt of this figure following a

top level meeting with Health chiefs Bill Ashworth, Chair of East Lancs Health Authority and David Peat, Chief Executive of ELHA.

The figures came to light after a campaign was run in 1998 where members of the public were encouraged to return unused or unwanted medicines to any local pharmacy.

Gordon Prentice said: "A staggering 20% of the medicines returned for disposal were in complete, unopened packs. The value of this waste is something that the NHS cannot afford, patients should be made aware of the level of drug waste and advised on how best to utilise GP practice repeat prescribing systems."

Note to editor: The value of medicines returned to 25 community pharmacies during the month of October 1998 was £18,500. If this pattern of return was reflected across all of 114 pharmacies in East Lancashire, the estimated value of medicines returned per year would be in excess of £1 million (2% of the annual primary care prescribing budget for East Lancashire.) Although this is likely to be an overestimate, at half the rate of return, the value would be £1/2 million.

For Immediate Release. No 141/99 Friday 11 June 1999

MP HEARS VOICES!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, a keen fan of choral music, will be in tune this Sunday when he listens to Nelson Civic Choir at a concert at Colne Municipal Hall to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

The MP said: "They've been singing their hearts out for half a century and to mark the occasion the three choirs will be singing a variety of songs, including a selection from one of my favourite musicals - Oklahoma."

For Immediate Release. No 142/99 Monday 21 June 1999

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves by The Federation of Deaf People to increase public awareness of issues affecting deaf people. They want to see British Sign Language (BSL) given more recognition and are marching to promote the cause - the "March for BSL" on Sunday 27 June in London.

The MP said: "Here in Pendle there are an estimated 10,000 people with hearing difficulties. Recognising British Sign Language is really important, deaf people should be able to play a full part in the life of the community. Thousands of deaf people and their hearing friends are expected at the rally and I wish them well."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 143/99 Tuesday 15 June 1999

THE POST OFFICE GEARS UP FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news that the Department of Trade and Industry is to forge ahead with the automation of the Post Office network. The DTI is aiming to complete the "Horizon Project" to ensure that the national Post Office network is computerised by 2001.

Gordon Prentice said: "Computerisation of the national network is central to creating a Post Office fit for the 21st Century. The Government is committed to a modernised, nation-wide network of post offices. A state-of-the-art post office in every village and High Street will bring major benefits for everyone and lots more services including banking."

The automation of the network will allow a move from traditional paper based methods to a more modern, efficient and fraud-proof way of paying benefits. Many benefit recipients already choose to receive benefits via payment into their bank accounts but the Government has assured that people who wish to collect their benefits in cash at Post Offices will continue to be able to do so.

The MP added: "The Government will be involving representatives from the Post Office, the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters and the Communications Workers Union and their job will be to work closely with ICL in delivering this highly complex project."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 144/99 Tuesday 15 June 1999

BEACON STATUS SIGNALS SUCCESS FOR ST MARY'S

PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE MP AT St MARY'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, NEWCHURCH IN PENDLE AT 10.30am FRIDAY 18 JUNE 1999.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting St Mary's CEP school to congratulate the staff of the school for achieving Beacon status. The announcement that St Mary's had been selected as one of 125 new Beacon schools was made last month by Schools Minister Estelle Morris.

It is part of the Government's massive expansion of Beacon schools. As part of the Excellence in Cities proposals, the aim is 1000 Beacon schools by 2002. The Minister said: "The Government sees Beacon schools as a key part in its drive to raise standards. Our ultimate aim is a national Beacon network spreading and sharing good practice and innovation."

Note to Editors: Successful schools bid for up to £50,000, each year, for three years. Letters of agreement will specify the particular strengths the schools are expected to draw upon and the means they are to employ to spread their good practice. These methods include: seminars to teachers/governors from other schools; mentoring; work shadowing; provision of in-service training; consultancy; using the Internet to spread good practice; developing partnerships with Initial Teacher Training institutions/local schools/LEAs; release of teachers to other establishments; support for newly qualified teachers; preparation of curriculum planning materials; video documentation.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

For Immediate Release. No 145/99 Monday 14 June 1999

MP WELCOMES MOVE TO LEVY 50% COUNCIL TAX ON EMPTY PROPERTIES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is delighted with the news that the Government has decided to give local authorities the power to charge landlords of empty properties a 50% council tax. The change is to come into force next April.

The MP, who spoke at a lively meeting of the East Lancashire Association of Landlords last Friday, said there should be a penalty for allowing property to remain unoccupied.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "There may be very good reasons why a property is unoccupied and the law currently recognises these. For example, a house could be empty because it is being extensively renovated. But too many empty homes here in Pendle are left empty and are allowed to decay because there is no financial penalty for leaving them unoccupied. These houses are a blot on the landscape and can blight whole neighbourhoods. That has got to change."

Note to Editors 2: Vacant Housing: England. 1998

Council area	Council Stock vacancy	Council stock %	Social Landlord vacancy	Social Landlord %	Private Sector Stock	Private Sector %
Pendle	63	1.5	31	3.1	930	4.5
Blackbrn with Darwen	1,085	9.8	200	6.9	2,987	6.8
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England total	81,700	2.5	29,300	2.8	623,300	3.8

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 146/99 Tuesday 15 June 1999

MP BACKS SPEEDY DECISIONS ON ASYLUM CASES

The Immigration and Asylum Bill which returns to the floor of the Commons today is a key part of a new system which is fairer, faster and firmer says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “I have asylum applications in my own constituency that have been dragging on for up to nine years. This in quite unacceptable. It is unfair to the applicant and unfair to the rest of us.”

The MP added: “The present system is slow, outdated and suffers from huge delays and backlogs. This is unfair to genuine applicants and encourages abuse. I want to see the Government delivering on its pledge made last year that, by April 2001, most initial asylum decisions would be dealt with within two months and most appeals in a further four months.”

“When applications are endlessly delayed, children can spend years in school here, getting used to living in the UK and, not unnaturally, making friends here. In these circumstances, to uproot them is wrong. For families with children, that pledge will now be brought forward to April 2000, with initial decisions on new applications delivered in an average of two months.”

Note to Editors: To help achieve this, an additional £120 million is being spent on the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) over the next three years, hundreds more staff are being deployed as caseworkers and asylum decision making is now running at 160 per cent of the levels achieved before the new team-based system came in. The Government is spending £900 million on asylum support over the next three years. The Bill will make Britain's system fairer by bringing back a right of appeal for those refused a visa for a family visit and it will regulate unscrupulous immigration advisers.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 151/99 Wednesday 16 May 1999

IMPROVING QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE IN THE NHS

A new way of improving quality and performance in the NHS was launched today by Health Secretary Frank Dobson. The publication of Clinical Indictors will help NHS Trusts, Health Authorities and Primary Care Groups to continually monitor and improve their performance so that patients everywhere have access to uniformly high standards of care.

Publication of the information was welcomed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “In this case, as with all statistics, they come with an obvious health warning. They are indicators - not league tables. And they have been compiled with the full co-operation of the medical profession.”

The indicators, which include death rates, hospital re-admission rates, cancer detection rates as well as health promotion, replace the former league tables that were felt to be too crude.

Frank Dobson said, "Standards matter to patients and to doctors and nurses. The Government is determined to raise standards to match the best in the NHS. But it is not possible to raise standards unless we have the right information to start with".

"These indicators are not league tables. To use them as league tables would be misleading. There are often very good reasons why one organisation appears to be performing differently form others. They are intended to provide top quality treatment everywhere."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 148/99 Tuesday 15 June 1999

SWIMMING IS A LIFE SAVER SAYS MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, wants to see every child a swimmer and is backing moves by Bristol West MP, Valerie Davey, to get a national debate going on swimming education. She has secured an adjournment debate on the subject next Monday (21 June).

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Lancashire has been getting some stick over its swimming policy and I know there are real concerns from all over the country about what is happening. Swimming is a vital life skill especially in places such as Pendle where there is so much open water and where we have a canal slicing through the area. Children have got to learn to swim.”

The MP continued: “Astonishingly, there is no centrally held information at the Department for Education or OFSTED on the number of children who leave primary school and meet the National Curriculum Key Stage II Objective ("To swim unaided, competently and safely, for at least 25 metres"). To get something of a national picture, Valerie contacted all 151 Local Education Authorities in England asking for any information they held on the number of pupils reaching Key stage II and able to swim over 25m. I shall be interested in hearing the results.”

“I want to know why so many LEAs are failing to meet the National Curriculum objective. Swimming is important and must remain an integral part of the National Curriculum.”

The MP added: “Every child should be a swimmer and every swimmer a life saver.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 149/99 Wednesday 16 June 1999

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance stood at 1,645 - an unemployment rate of 4.4%. There were 1,253 men and 392 women out of work.

Nationally, the latest figures show employment continuing to rise and unemployment falling. The figures published today show: the number of people in jobs increased by 46,000 over the last
three months to a record 27.3 million; unemployment fell by 23,000 on the ILO measure and the claimant count also dropped by 6,500.

The MP said: “We now have over 27.3 million people in employment - the highest ever recorded. And we have had further good news this week from Rolls Royce, one of Pendle’s biggest employers, who announced at the Paris Air Show over £200m

worth of new contracts. I am hopeful that this latest success will reduce the likelihood of any further job losses at Barnoldswick."

With 27,360,000 people in employment, the UK's employment rate is one of the best in Europe, and is second only to Denmark in the EU.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 150/99 Wednesday 16 May 1999

MP WELCOMES 20 MPH ZONES

New legislation comes into force today allowing local authorities to create 20 mph zones or speed limits in their own areas, without needing Government approval.

Until now local authorities could only create 20 mph speed limits or zones if they first obtained the consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice commented: "There are lots of residential areas where speeding traffic creates enormous safety problems. Local authorities such as my own in Pendle are well placed to decide which neighbourhoods and which streets should be designated as go-slow."

Note to Editors: The first 20 mph zones were installed in 1991 in Sheffield, Kingston upon Thames and Norwich. There are now well over 300 in existence and they have been highly successful in reducing road
casualties. Pedestrian casualties were on average reduced by around 60% and more so for children - 67% for child pedestrians and child cyclists.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 151/99 Thursday 17 June 1999

MP IS TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER IS NO LIBERAL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, was today reassured that the Prime Minister is no closet Liberal. The Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett was responding to a question from the MP which had been prompted by a claim from Paddy Ashdown in the Guardian on 11 June that Cabinet Ministers referred to the PM privately as “the Liberal”.

The MP asked Margaret Beckett: “Has my Rt Hon Friend seen the mischievous valedictory article in the Guardian by the member for Yeovil (Paddy Ashdown) in which he claims that members of the Cabinet - the Labour Cabinet - refer privately to the Prime Minister as “the Liberal”. Why does he say such things?”

She told MPs: "All I can say to you is that I have never heard anybody so describe the Prime Minister - in the Cabinet or outside it."

The MP added: “But is my friend aware that the leadership baton is likely to be passed to the member for Ross Cromarty and Skye (Charles Kennedy) who told the press yesterday that he apparently wants to see pensions reform discussed by the Joint Cabinet Consultative Committee. Given the change in leadership in the Lib Dems, is there not a case for a debate on the role and functions of the joint committee and where all this is taking us?”

Mrs Beckett brushed off Ashdown’s claim saying: "He's trying desperately to claim expanded membership of his party from anywhere he can."

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News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 152/99 Monday 21 June 1999

ROLLS ROYCE POWERS AHEAD BUT REDUNDANCY THREAT PERSISTS

Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, predicted a rosy future for the aerospace company when he met Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today - but only if Rolls matches and then beats the productivity of its two main competitors, General Electric and Pratt and Whitney.

The two hour long meeting, involving Rolls Royce chiefs and MPs with RR plants in their constituencies, was called following bleak news in April that the company was looking for redundancies - including 90 in Barnoldswick - at a time when the £13 billion order book had never been bigger nor the profits fatter.

Speaking after the meeting at the company's Buckingham Gate HQ in central London, the Pendle MP said: "We discussed the possibilities for re-deployment and retraining and that must be the way forward at Barlick."

"When a company has to change to meet new market challenges, you don't automatically get rid of people. You look to fit them in elsewhere. In a company the size of RR employing highly skilled and motivated people, that is simple common sense. I was assured there was no target set by the centre for job reductions - it was up to local plants to identify and deliver efficiency savings. In my view, RR can only do this by keeping its workforce on board."

The MP added: "The company is committed to delivering double digit earnings growth to its shareholders - but it mustn't neglect the people who work for it. They have a big stake in the success of the firm. I told the Chief Executive that the people on the shop

more follows

floor had done their bit. Output has shot up by a staggering 60% over the past three years and the number of RR engines on the wing is growing by 8% compound every year."

"RR is growing fast and this is good news for the future. In 1996, the company delivered 424 aero engines. In 1997, 625 and last year 911. I was told the company is now looking to produce 1,100 engines. In 1987, RR engines were on 6 airframes; in 1997 they are on 30. By any standard these are impressive figures."

Summing up, the MP said: "It was a useful meeting and there was a frank exchange of views. We all recognise that Rolls Royce is hugely important for the UK - and for Barnoldswick. In fact the Labour Government expressed its confidence in the company last year by giving it £200m in launch aid to help develop the hugely successful Trent family of engines."

"No-one wants to see any compulsory redundancies and I am keeping my fingers crossed they won't happen."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 153/99 Wednesday 23 June 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT LANESHAWBRIDGE CP SCHOOL FRIDAY 25 JUNE AT 11.30am

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting Laneshawbridge CP school this Friday to have a look round the school and to chat to the Head, Eileen Bleasdale, the staff and pupils.

The school has recently had an impressive Inspection Report from OFSTED praising the schools high quality state education.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 154/99 Tuesday 22 June 1999

MP IN ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON FUTURE OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be discussing the future of the textile industry and the fierce competitive pressures facing local firms when he visits Albert Hartleys this Friday.

The Barnoldswick home textiles firm - a part of the Coats Viyella Group - now employs 97 people - well down on the workforce in the early 1990s. Thirty jobs went earlier this year and 60 in February 1998. In 1996, 144 jobs disappeared.

Speaking before the meeting, the MP said: “The threat to our textile finishing firms from EU plans to impose import duties on the import of unbleached cotton cloth fortunately never materialised. But there are still huge challenges facing the industry. High Street retailers are always looking for the cheapest sources and competition in the High Street is cut throat.”

The MP added: “The local economy has changed beyond recognition in the space of 20 years but textiles are still important. I want to hear from the people at the sharp end what the Government can do, in practical terms, to help local firms.”

Note to Editors: Textile workers from Pendle lobbied MPs at Westminster last November to press the case for textiles which still employs over 370,000 people, 10% of the UK's manufacturing work force. The lobby co-incided with the publication of the publication of the "Social Partners' Action Plan for Clothing and Textiles" - drawn up by the British Apparel and Textile Confederation and the three main trade unions which organise in the industry - the T&G, KFAT and the GMB. UK textiles production is worth over £17 billion with roughly half produced in the clothing and knitwear sectors and the other from the textile sector. The UK ranks fourth in Europe in terms of the value of textile goods produced.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 155/99 Thursday 24 June 1999

MP CALLS FOR DEBATE ON BAe RESTRUCTURING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon called for an early debate on the restructuring of the British Aerospace Military Aircraft Division following the company’s announcement earlier today that 2,200 jobs would be going - including 882 at Warton.

The MP told the Commons the job losses were "incomprehensible" given the Government’s go ahead for the Eurofighter Typhoon. The Pendle MP said over £10 billion of public money was going into the programme and it had committed itself to buy 230 warplanes at over £40m each.

Speaking after the exchange with the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, the MP said: “Aerospace is a lifeblood for the North West. At the moment I am still uncertain what, if any, will be the consequences for BAe suppliers throughout the region.”

“Clearly, there are major issues which need to be addressed. We need an honest debate about where the restructuring of the aerospace industry is taking us.”

Note to Editors: On 24 June 1999, the Site General Manager of the BAe site at Samlesbury wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: "As a company we are investing heavily in our engineering capability, advanced manufacturing processes and facilities in a continuous drive to improve productivity and maintain our position as one of the world's leading aerospace and defence companies."

"This investment must be set against a backdrop of mergers in both Europe and the US, changing customer requirements-and shrinking defence budgets. Within the military aircraft sector, reductions in manufacturing are being counterbalanced by increases in engineering work and professional support activities. In manufacturing, we face the dual pressures of over-capacity and increasingly fierce competition."

"It is against this background, that today British Aerospace has announced

more follows

MP CALLS FOR DEBATE ON BAe RESTRUCTURING

plans to close the Dunsford site, and open up a Voluntary Release programme at all the other six sites within the Military Aircraft and Aerostructures and Customer Support Services Business Units."

"The site closure will take around 18 months, during which time we will do all that we can to maximise employment opportunities for Dunsford employees, through offers of re deployment to other parts of the business. We will also be putting in place a range of other support mechanisms for staff affected. Work currently carried out there will be transferred to other sites to ensure that we retain Harrier/STOVL capabilities."

"The Voluntary Release programme is aimed at realising the benefits of the investments mentioned above and the introduction of new processes which have enabled significant improvements in efficiency and productivity."

"At Warton Unit, we intend to accept appropriate applications for release for up to 882 employees, When we recently approached employees to gauge levels of interest in Voluntary release, well in excess of this figure registered an interest."

"While clearly this is a major cost reduction programme, it is vital that we accomplish it successfully to maintain our - and Britain's - competitive edge in aerospace and defence at time of world-wide consolidation and ever more demanding customer requirements. It will be a challenging time for employees with re deployment and re-skilling being necessary to match resources with new business requirements, but equally the changes will provide great opportunities for us all."

"We are determined to handle this programme sensitively and professionally, doing all that we can to meet our people's aspirations and minimise any impact on all our stakeholders, such as customers and suppliers. I am sure we can count on your support. If you need to know any more, please do get back to me."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 156/99 Tuesday 22 June 1999

MP BACKS INCOME BOOST FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today backed the new Working Families Tax Credit by voting to send the Tax Credits Bill back to the House of Lords where it had been opposed by Tory peers.

The Chancellor Gordon Brown announced the Working Families Tax Credit [WFTC] in the Budget statement in March 1998 and increased the WFTC in Budget '99. The WFTC is due to replace Family Credit from October 1999, in three months time.

The MP said: "The WFTC will give a better deal to Pendle's working families. It means a guaranteed take-home pay of £200 a week or £IO,000 a year for any family with a full time worker. No family with earnings of less than £235 a week - £12,000 a year - will pay income tax."

"On average families with children will be £740 a year better off as a result of changes the Government is making. Many families in Pendle and 170,000 families across the North West will benefit. The WFTC together with the National Minimum Wage and National Insurance reforms, will lift over 1,250,000 people out of poverty, 700,000 of them children."

"The Conservatives foolishly are jeopardising this support for working families. They have repeatedly opposed the WFTC in the Commons and William Hague has pledged it would be scrapped under any future Conservative Government. This would mean an instant £24 a week tax rise for every family. Once again the Conservatives have used their permanent in built majority in the House of Lords to oppose a measure which has received overwhelming support in the House of Commons."

more follows

MP BACKS INCOME BOOST FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The MP added: "The Working Families Tax Credit means working families take home more of what they earn with more help for families on low-income families."

Note to Editors: The Working Families Tax Credit makes work pay for families. Any family with a full time worker will be guaranteed take-home pay of at least £200 a week - over £10,000 a year. No family with an income of less £235 a week - more than £12,000 a year - will pay net income tax. More than 1.2 million families will benefit from WFTC.

The Working Families Tax Credit replaces Family Credit from October 1999. Under WFTC families will keep more of what they earn. A family earning £13,000 will be up to £50 a week or £2,500 a year better off.
A single earner family with two children on £20,000 a year will be £460 a year better off. As a result of the last two Budgets, families with children, will on average, be £740 a year better off.

Based on total WFTC expenditure for 2000/01 (£4.9 billion) WFTC will provide
• an average £67 per week to 1.4 million families - an extra £24 per week on top of Family Credit
• an average £32.88 per week to 2.9 million children - an extra £12 per week on top of Family Credit

• The Working Families Tax Credit will be automatically paid through the pay packet except in couples where they will choose who receives the WFTC from April 2000. There is no threat to independent taxation from the Working Families Tax Credit.

• Small businesses paying the WFTC to their employees will benefit from many of the measures the Government is introducing - the cut in small business tax to 20p, the new 10p rate of tax for small businesses and the new voucher to help pay for payroll services, administered by the small business service.

• Working families will see increased returns from work; the amount of benefit withdrawn as income increases - the taper - will be reduced from 70% in Family Credit to 55% in Working Families Tax Credit.

More help to low income families with children

The Working Families Tax Credit will ease the poverty trap by reducing marginal tax rates for half a million families, currently in receipt of Family Credit.

We are also targeting this help towards the poorest so that on average £750 more will be going every year to each of the 5.75 million children in the poorest families by the end of this Parliament.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 157/99 Thursday 24 June 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP IN BARNOLDSWICK TOWN CENTRE TO PRESENT CERTIFICATES FOR CHRISTIAN AID SATURDAY 26 JUNE 1999 AT 10.00am

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be in the town square in Barnoldswick this Saturday with Christian Aid organiser Trish Pepper presenting certificates to those who have been raising funds locally for the charity.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 159/99 Wednesday 23 June 1999

MP WELCOMES BIG BOOST IN NUMBER OF DOCTORS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS

New centres of medical education are being created and leading medical schools are to be expanded in the biggest boost to medical student training in a generation. New figures published this week show that during the new Government's first year of office (1997-98), the number of doctors working in the NHS increased by 2,200. There are now 91,800 doctors working in the NHS, the highest figure in its history and the first time the figure has breached the 90,000 barrier.

And in a further boost to doctor numbers, Health Minister John Denham today welcomed the announcement of over 840 new undergraduate training places for medical students in England, plus more than 100 further additional places subsequently - the biggest increase in medical student training places for thirty years.

The extra 2,200 doctors who started work in the NHS between Autumn 1997 and Autumn 1998 include 840 new hospital medical consultants and 300 new GPs, including 100 extra GP trainees. The extra 840 consultants means that there are now: 200 extra anaesthetists, 180 extra psychiatrists, 70 extra children's consultants and 30 extra A&E consultants.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, added: “There is a looming shortage of doctors in East Lancashire as many of our GPs approach retirement age. This is especially true in Pendle. So this boost to medical manpower is just what the doctor ordered.”

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News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 159/99 Wednesday 23 June 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP JOINS THE RAMBLERS AT TOWNELEY HALL, BURNLEY SATURDAY 26 JUNE AT 12.30pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be stepping out with Burnley and Pendle Ramblers at Towneley Hall in Burnley this Saturday.

The MP said: “This is an annual event and rambles will be taking place this weekend all over the country. More than 7,000 people are expected to take part in hundreds of walks around England, Scotland and Wales as part of the Ramblers’ Association annual Family Rambling Day.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 160/99 Wednesday 23 June 1999

MP BACKS HELP FOR THE WORLD’S POOR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is joining local churches and voluntary organisations in welcoming moves by the UK Government to give financial help to the world’s poorest countries.

The MP said: "Many of these countries simply cannot afford to pay, so their populations go hungry and their children face disease and no prospect of education. The action, which the Prime Minister has just announced, will help countries to provide schooling for their children and better health care. Often the debts were incurred by corrupt regimes, long since gone. The slate must be wiped clean where democratic governments have taken over these countries and taken on the debts.”

The MP's comment follows the announcement in Cologne at the weekend by the G8 industrialised countries of a three point package to help the poorest countries:

* 38 of the world's poorest countries could get up to $50 billion of debt reduction
* the cancellation of overseas development debt will save the countries $20 billion
* debt relief will save them another $30 billion - in total, the package saves two thirds of the Heavily Indebted Poorest Countries’ debts

The MP added: “The UK Government persuaded the G8 industrial countries to write off the debt of 36 of the world’s poorest countries. These debts have impoverished hundreds of millions of people. In Ethiopia, for example, the average annual income is barely $106 per person a year, while the debt is $169 per person.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 161/99 Thursday 24 June 1999

LANCASHIRE GETS HIGH MARKS FOR CUTTING RED TAPE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says Lancashire LEA (local education authority) is spending well below the national average on administration and deserves a pat on the back. However, the MP nevertheless says Lancashire shouldn't rest on its laurels.

The MP's comments co-incided with the publication today of English LEAs' school budgets. The tables show the progress that LEAs are making in delegating budgets to schools and keeping a tight rein on central administration.

Speaking at Westminster, the MP said: "These tables provide useful information but they do not tell the whole story. There is a real job of work to be done in getting the LEA and the schools talking to each other so everyone understands what is happening and what the figures really mean."

The Chair of Lancashire County Council 's Education and Cultural Services Committee, County Councillor Hazel Harding added:
"Lancashire's results clearly show the high priority the County Council places on schools. We already meet and exceed the targets for low spending on administration and increased levels of delegation Mr Blunkett has set for next year."

"Despite a very difficult budget settlement, the tables show we spend £2,538 per pupil - more than the average for upper tier authorities,, and the 6.1% increase the County has passed on to schools is also above average. Most of our spending is in schools to directly benefit our pupils. Our spending on administration is 7th lowest of 148 English authorities, the average for the country is
£49 per pupil - in Lancashire it is only £29, confirming what we

more follows

have always said about the cost effectiveness of Lancashire County Council's administration."

Note to Editors: Hazel Harding adds:

• Lancashire has met the Secretary of State's 3 targets for 2000/2001 this year:

LEAs spending below £65 per pupil on administration (Lancashire spends £29);

at least 80% delegation of LSB (Local Schools Budget) (Lancashire delegates 80.5% which will increase next year);

a 5% increase in delegated funding per pupil (Lancashire increased by 6.1% this year)

• Lancashire spends £2,,538 per pupil, compared to the average for upper tier authorities of £2,516

• Lancashire's delegated funding to schools increased by 6.1% last year compared to a 5.9% increase for other shire-counties and 6.1% average nationally

• Lancashire spends only £29 per pupil on LEA administration - £20 less than the national average, the 7th lowest figure in the country

• Lancashire is spending some £20m above its SSA on education

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 162/99 Tuesday 29 June 1999

PHOTOCALL: Gordon Prentice MP is the Guest of Honour at the annual prize giving at Lomeshaye Junior School on Friday 2 July at 1.30pm.

The prize giving at the school in Norfolk Street, Nelson will take place from 1.30pm - 2.30pm starting with a short instrumental presentation followed by the presentation of a wide range of prizes and awards to pupils and a speech from the MP.

The MP will be shown round the school by some pupils.

The contact is the Headteacher, Carl Robertson, on 01282 612063

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 163/99 Tuesday 29 June 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP will be at the Community Action Network Education Event at Edge End High School on Friday 2 July at 12.30pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be at Edge End High School this Friday at 12.30pm to present awards on behalf of the Community Action Network.

The event will

- launch the artwork produced in the "our Future, Ourselves" project
- celebrate the environmental work carried out y Pendle schools in 1998/9 in the form of a special awards ceremony.

The MP, who describes himself as an MP "with green edges" will make a short speech prior to the presentation of the awards.

Contact Helen Blyth from the Community Action Network on 01282 661614.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 164/99 Tuesday 29 June 1999

MP IN A SPIN OVER POLICE HELICOPTER

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Lancashire police chiefs next month to discuss the role and use of the police helicopter.

Earlier this month, the appearance of the helicopter in the middle of the night over a slumbering Barnoldswick - the town where the MP lives - caused consternation as people left their beds to find out what was happening. Later reports confirmed that the helicopter, which was in the vicinity, had been called in following a car theft.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Helicopters make a tremendous racket and, when used with sweeping searchlights, are guaranteed to wake the dead. Clearly, the decision to bring in the helicopter over a built up area in the hours of darkness is not one that is taken lightly given the inevitable disturbance."

The MP added: "The police helicopter has proved its worth over the years. But in view of what happened in Barnoldswick I am obviously interested in finding out more about how, why and when it is deployed. Clearly, serious crimes require a serious response."

The MP contacted Police Chief, Pauline Clare, following the Barnoldswick incident.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 165/99 Wednesday 30 June 1999

POST 16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING SET FOR SHAKE UP

Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett today launched a white paper outlining a new framework of opportunities for post-16 education and training. It forms a key part of the Government's drive to raise education standards.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "I have long been concerned about the complexity of the current system and the duplication and overlap. I believe the new framework will bring coherence and improve the quality of advice available to young people."

The reformed post-16 education and training framework will be firmly based on the Government's belief that post-16 education and lifelong learning are the key to prosperity for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole.

Notes to Editors: The Review of Post-16 Education and Training was announced by the Secretary of State in March this year. The White Paper "Learning to Succeed", has two aims. First, to address a situation in which many people with low skills and poor qualifications are excluded from the benefits that learning can bring and locked into a cycle of disadvantage.

Secondly, to rationalise a system which is characterised by incoherent and confusing structures for planning and funding, excessive bureaucracy, insufficient focus on skill needs, lack of innovation, inconsistent inspection standards and poor responsiveness to individuals', and employers', needs. There will be:

• a national Learning and Skills Council to provide coherence and reduce bureaucracy, with 40-50 local Learning and Skills Councils to develop local plans

• a strengthened strategic role for business in education and training influencing a £5b budget, compared to the current £1 billion spent by Training and Enterprise Councils

more follows

• a new youth support service called Connections to address the needs of young people, part of modernising the Careers and Youth Services with dedicated personal advisers for young people;

• greater co-operation between sixth forms and colleges, whilst preserving real terms funding for popular sixth forms;

• an independent, effective inspectorate covering adults and all work-related learning and training, and a new role for OFSTED who will be responsible for inspecting all full-time education for 16-19 year olds

A new Learning & Skills Council (LSC)

A new LSC for England will be established from April 2001 to drive forward improvements in standards and bring greater coherence and responsiveness. The LSC will arrange delivery of all post-16 education and training (except HE) and will assume responsibility for:

• funding colleges (formerly responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council for England),
• advising the Government on the National Learning Targets (formerly responsibility of National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets)-,
• funding Modern Apprenticeships, National Traineeships and other Government-funded training and workforce development (formerly responsibility of Training and Enterprise Councils)
• developing, in partnership with LEAs, arrangements for adult and community learning; providing information, advice and guidance to adults;
• working with the pre-16 education sector to ensure coherence across 14-19 education

Improving Quality: The LSC will be responsible for developing and maintaining a quality improvement strategy. This will be underpinned by new rigorous, independent inspection arrangements. Coherence will be improved by unifying the inspection processes for young people learning in schools and colleges through to the age of 19 under OFSTED. A new independent Inspectorate will be created to assess the quality of provision for adults and of all work based training. The new Inspectorate will work closely with OFSTED to ensure a common approach to inspection.

Young People - broadening access, improving support: The Government is committed to ensuring that far more young people continue in education and training through their teenage years until they are at least 19. To this end, we will shortly be publishing a strategy called 'Connexions' to ensure that the necessary support is in place to promote opportunity and tackle barriers to learning,

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 166/99 Wednesday 30 June 1999

MP CALLS FOR SPEEDY ACTION TO TACKLE URBAN WASTELANDS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, called today for speedy action to implement the recommendations of the Urban Taskforce chaired by leading architect, Richard Rogers. The report, published yesterday, lists a series of measures designed to breath new life into Britain's run down areas.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the Pendle MP said: "This report has huge implications for my own area and East Lancashire generally. We have too many blighted and run down areas, too many empty homes and places where no-one wants to live. That is why the imaginative solutions proposed by Richard Rogers will strike a chord with so many people."

The task force also confirmed that the government's target of 60 per cent of new homes to be built on previously used land is essential to protect the countryside from the threats of urban sprawl. Policies based on the principles of design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility were fundamental to this future regeneration. The task force considered that this could best be achieved through the planning system, reinforced by fiscal incentives.

The task force says people should be enabled to live closer to work and that communities should have shops, schools and other facilities within easy reach. They also confirmed that integrated transport policies were essential for an urban renaissance.

Note to Editors: The Government is to publish a new Urban White Paper.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 167/99 Wednesday 30 June 1999

MP BACKS CURB ON LIGHTER FUEL SALES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves to clamp down on lighter fuel sales to young people. This week Home Office Minister George Howarth announced that it will become an offence to sell gas cigarette lighter refills to under 18s.

New statistics show that over half the deaths caused by abuse of gases, aerosols and glues were caused by lighter refills.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: “It beggars belief that some shop keepers would even countenance selling lighter fuel to youngsters - given all the publicity about how some kids get their kicks. The Government is absolutely right to act.”

They are a timely reminder of how important it is to take action in preventing young people from abusing these substances. The measure complements the government's ten year anti-drugs strategy, Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain, which aims to reduce the harm caused by substance misuse.

George Howarth said: "Some retailers have already taken steps to prevent young people having access to gas lighter refills. By making it an offence to sell the refills to youngsters I hope that all retailers will sit up, take notice and play their part in ensuring that children do not die because of this horrible activity."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for “GORDON 1” and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 168/99 Wednesday 30 June 1999

MP's PROBE UNCOVERS HIGH COST OF NEGLIGENCE

Over the past four years the NHS has paid out £1,073,192 to settle claims after surgical bits and pieces were left inside patients following surgery. In total, 252 claims were lodged alleging negligence arising from surgical detritus left in wounds following an operation.

The figures were revealed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice after the MP had probed the cost of negligence in the operating theatre. Health Minister John Denham told the MP: "The NHS Litigation Authority reports that payments in respect of claims arising from a foreign body left inside a patient following surgery amounted to £1,073,192 for the period 1 April 1995 to date."

Commenting on the figures, the MP said: "Surgeons and other operating theatre staff are highly skilled and committed professionals who often work in pressured and stressful conditions. Our lives are in their hands. But surely it must be possible to double check that nothing has inadvertently been left behind before the wound is stitched up. The cost of negligence to the patient and the NHS is far too high."

Note to Editors: Hospital inpatient activity for the financial years 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 where a foreign body has accidentally been left in a body cavity or operation wound following a procedure.

Year	Finished consultant episodes	Deaths
1995-96	841	4
1996-97*	756	11
1997-98*	749	8

Source Department of Health, Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) *Figures for 1996-97 and 1997-98 are provisional

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 169/99 Thursday 1 July 1999

MP WELCOMES CHANGES TO THE CSA

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing plans to reform the Child Support Agency. But in the Commons this afternoon he warned Social Security Secretary, Alistair Darling, to make it crystal clear to people that the new system cannot be brought in overnight. The new system, which is to be up and running for all new cases by the end of 2001 will absorb existing cases thereafter.

The Pendle MP told the Commons the Government had inherited a complete shambles and that he understood the need to proceed carefully. “The CSA has always been teetering on the verge of collapse as its staff struggled to cope with the huge complexities of the system devised by the previous Government. We need simplicity and that, unfortunately, means rough justice for some. The price of fine tuning the system to allow for the enormous variations in personal circumstances is simply too high.”

“This time, we want the CSA to operate like a well oiled machine rather than the clapped out old banger we inherited.”

Note to editors: Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, Secretary of State for Social Security, writes: Over one million children will benefit from the reform of the CSA which we have announced. The new changes mean that maintenance will be calculated in days not months * getting help to children where it is needed. Our reforms put children first, ensure that the new system is fair and simple and will rebuild confidence in the child support system. We inherited a mess from the Tories which we promised to sort out and this White Paper shows that we are. This is the Labour Government delivering for children. It will make the system of child support faster, fairer and more efficient. Fairer for fathers who want to support their children and tougher on those who won't.

We're determined to make sure children get all the help they need, which is why we are introducing a new system of child support that is simple, effective and fair. The Child Support system should help parents meet their responsibilities. And, where necessary, take action when parents won't.

more follows

MP WELCOMES CHANGES TO THE CSA (2)

Which is why our reforms mark a new contract for child support * based on the right of children to the care and support of their parents. And, the responsibility of parents to provide it. The responsibility for bringing up children lies squarely with both parents. And it's a responsibility that endures whether they live together or apart.

All children have the right to a decent start in life. And, this Government's already doing a great deal to help: We're increasing child benefit by a record amount. We're providing more help for low-paid families through the new Working Families Tax Credit, the new 10p starting rate of tax, and the national minimum wage. Together this means a family on £13,000 a year will be better-off by up to £2,500 a year. We're investing £540m in the Sure Start programme for very young, disadvantaged children.
And we're committed to ending the scandal of child poverty in a generation.

The Problem: Background to the CSA The last government set up the Child Support Agency in 1993 to replace a courts system that couldn't cope.
Going back to the courts isn't the answer. In 1979 52% of lone-parents on Income Support were getting maintenance. By 1990 the courts were getting money to only 20%. On top of this, decisions were often unpredictable, unreliable, and unfair.

The CSA was meant to sort this out. But, it didn't. The system we inherited has failed. The need for reform in the CSA was clear: Under the present system, only 250,000 children actually get maintenance. And, only 100,000 children get all they should. 30% of parents who are in work and supposed to be paying through the CSA are actually paying nothing towards the care of their child. That can't be right. It doesn't help parents who want to pay. And it isn't tough enough on those who won't.

The percentage of lone-parents on Income Support getting child maintenance is the same today as it was when the Agency was set up * testimony to a system that has failed both children and parents. The CSA became a bureaucratic nightmare for parents and staff alike. And the reason for that is clear. Under the current system the CSA can need over 100 different pieces of information to make a single decision. So, today, a third of all child support cases wait at least six months for a decision.

The CSA spends 90% of its time chasing information, and only 10% chasing parents who won't pay. The result is many responsible parents who genuinely want to support their children often find themselves facing a mountain of debt through no fault of their own. While irresponsible parents can play the system to their advantage and end up paying nothing for their children. And it's children who lose out.

These failures have their roots in the complexity of the current system. And the result is an administration so burdened that only root and branch reform will turn things round. So, we're tackling that inheritance by introducing a simple, new and effective system of child support. Delivering for children by reforming the policy * and rebuilding the Agency.

THE SOLUTION: Radical Reform for a Radical New System We're putting the confidence back into child support by introducing radical

more follows

reforms in four key areas: First, we're abolishing the current system for calculating child support * replacing unworkable policy with a workable new system, based on a simple way of deciding how much parents should pay. Under the new system a father will pay a flat-rate percentage of his take-home pay * 15% if he has one child to support, 20% if he has two and 25% if he has three. For fathers on less than £100 a week there'll be a flat rate payment of £5 a week. These changes are fairer to fathers because they're more reasonable and realistic. They're fairer to mothers who will get money much more quickly. And, they're fairer to children who will actually get the money they need.

Second, we're turning the Agency round. So it provides a decent and effective service to all parents. To make sure that children actually get the money from their parents * and quickly. By replacing the complex formula with new simple rates we're laying the foundations for a far better service than would ever be possible under the current system. And thanks to an extra £28 million over the next 3 years, the CSA will get new IT, and will make more use of the phone * to sort queries out quickly.

Third, we're introducing tough new measures to deal with parents who try and run away from their responsibilities. As part of this, for first time ever, we're making it a criminal offence to fail to provide, or misrepresent, information to the Agency.

Fourth, we're helping the fight against child poverty by introducing new help for children in the poorest families. Under the current system, mothers lose their Income Support pound for pound whenever any maintenance is paid. And, because mothers lose out, their children lose out too. So there is significant new help for children in the poorest families who will get up to £10 a week more. Over of a million children will gain from this change alone. That's real help from this Government for children in the poorest families.

Timetable for Change The formula cannot be changed without legislation. In order to avoid the problems which occurred when the current system was introduced too quickly, the reformed system will be introduced for new cases towards the end of 2001. Existing cases will come onto the new system later, once the system is up and running.

Help for existing cases Initiatives already under way in the CSA will improve the service. These include: Encouraging staff to make greater use of the telephone in keeping clients informed and making sure that payments are up to date; An additional 600 staff to provide a better face to face service in locations convenient for the client; and Improved decision making procedures (introduced in June) will allow disputes to be resolved more quickly and with less bureaucracy; From October, child support liability can be based in the most recent tax return; Legislation in the Welfare Reform Bill (currently before Parliament) will allow the CSA access to tax records if a self-employed non-resident parent refuses to supply this information.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 170/99 Tuesday 14 July 1999

NELSON AND COLNE COLLEGE WINS AGAIN

The Schools' Analyst Competition for secondary schools is the prestigious schools science competition organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry's Analytical Division and it is the only analytical competition for schools - and Nelson and Colne College has won for the second year in a row!

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "This is a tremendous achievement for Nelson and Colne - not least because they won in the teeth of 200 other competition entrants from all over the UK. 16 teams (from the lower 6th) took part in the national final having each won through to the Final by winning their own regional heats."

The delighted MP added: "I have tabled a Commons motion congratulating the team. They are a credit to the College and to Pendle and I am proud of them all. It is marvellous."

Notes to Editor: The Pendle MP will table the following Early Day Motion today (Monday 5 July) : That this House congratulates Nelson and Colne College in winning the Schools' Analyst Competition organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry's Analytical Division; notes that this is the second year running that Nelson and Colne College has won this competition; notes that this is the only national analytical competition for secondary schools and colleges and that Nelson and Colne College emerged as winners from over 200 schools and colleges throughout the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland after successfully analysing a number of samples related to the environment, food products and health; congratulates the winning team of students, Rebecca Taylor, Helene Duerden and Mark Taylor and their teacher Mrs Jill Hunt; and applauds the Analytical Chemistry Trust Fund of the Society for its continued commitment to education in schools and colleges.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 171/99 Monday 5 July 1999

MP TO VOTE AGAINST AA TAKEOVER

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, one of the country's 4.6 million AA members, confirmed today that he will be voting against the planned takeover of the AA by Centrica, owners of British gas.

AA members are in line to scoop windfalls of £240 each in October if the deal gets the go ahead by two thirds of the AA's membership in a ballot next month.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I am a great believer in the mutual principle and it saddened me to see so many building society's turn into banks. When this happens, in the long term it is the shareholders who stand to benefit rather than all the members collectively. The same thing is likely to happen to the AA if this £1.1 billion deal goes through."

The MP is Chair of the Parliamentary All Party Roads Study Group and takes a close interest in transport matters.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 172/99 Monday 5 July 1999

MP CALLS FOR "REDESIGNED PENSION BOOK" TO HIGHLIGHT UNCLAIMED BENEFITS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for the radical re-design of the Pension Book to highlight the millions of pounds in benefit which go begging every year as pensioners fail to claim what they are entitled to.

In the Commons this afternoon, the Pendle MP asked Social Security Minister, Stephen Timms, when he last looked at a Pension Book. The MP told the Minister there is information in the Pension Book about additional help for cash strapped pensioners "but you need 20:20 vision to read it."

The MP said the Pensions Book should be redesigned to grab the attention of pensioners - pointing out that one million pensioners who could claim income support choose not to.

The Minister told the MP that 700,000 (and not one million) of the poorest pensioners did not claim what they were entitled to and that he expected the results shortly of a research project set up to establish the reasons for this reluctance to claim.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "We need to get across to pensioners that this cash is just sitting there, waiting to be picked up by those entitled to it. An eye catching page in the Pensions Book would do the trick rather than the small print we have at the moment."

"Far too many pensioners live in poverty" he added.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 173/99 Tuesday 6 July 1999

PENDLE DENTISTS TO TACKLE HEALTH MINISTER

A high level delegation of Pendle dentists led by local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Health Minister, John Denham, tomorrow (Wednesday 7 July) for a frank exchange on the problems facing NHS dentistry in the area.

The meeting, in the Health Department HQ in Whitehall, was set up by the Pendle MP who was furious that valuable grants under the Government's "Investing in Dentistry" initiative had seemingly passed Pendle by - despite the fact that the area has the worst children's dental health in the country. Since the row blew up, one grant has gone to an NHS practice in Nelson.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The Government inherited a sorry mess but we can’t use that excuse for ever. However, it remains a fact that the Conservatives did everything they could to persuade people to go private. It’s a big job to turn things around.”

“The Government’s Investing in Dentistry initiative, which targets cash on the areas where NHS dentists are thin on the ground, has had teething troubles and I want to see all the cash promised by the Government finding its way down to the dental practices. Last December, the British Dental Association published figures showing that £13m of promised funding had not got through to the dentists. I want to know who is gumming things up.”

Note to Editors: The delegation includes Bill Ashworth, Chair of the East Lancashire Health Authority and Dr Gary Whittle, Consultant in Dental Public Health. A Green Paper on NHS dentistry is expected to be published shortly.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for “GORDON 1” and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 174/99 Tuesday 6 July 1999

PENDLE MP INSISTS WILDLIFE LEGISLATION “ISN’T FOR THE BIRDS”

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice, is to urge early action to safeguard wildlife and habitats which, he claims, are under threat. The MP will be speaking in tomorrow’s adjournment debate which will call for greater protection for Britain’s wildlife.

The countryside access campaigner wants to see a major Countryside and Wildlife Bill introduced in the next Queen’s Speech in November - fulfilling the pledge he was given in March by Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, that access legislation would be brought forward “as soon as Parliamentary time permits”.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Life is a real struggle for our wildlife. English Nature estimates that over 300 of our top wildlife sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest - SSSIs) are lost or damaged every year. At almost one SSSI damaged every day, time really is of the essence.”

The MP added: “Access to the countryside and habitat protection are both sides of the same coin. I want to see responsible access where habitats and wildlife are safeguarded. Tomorrow is the 50th anniversary of Labour’s 1949 National Parks and

Access to the Countryside Act - a splendid opportunity for the Government to commit itself to new and much needed legislation."

Note to Editors A Press Conference will be held after the debate at 11.30am in Room W3 at the House of Commons

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 175/99 Monday 12 July 1999

MP BACKS COMMITMENT TO END TO BLOOD SPORTS

The Prime Minister's commitment last week to bring forward legislation to ban hunting with hounds has been hailed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice - a long-standing campaigner against blood sports. The Home Secretary is expected to give further details of the planned legislation at Home Office questions this afternoon.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Last year, arcane Parliamentary procedures torpedoed Michael Foster's Private Member's Bill despite the fact that 411 MPs voted for a ban on foxhunting at the Bill's second reading stage. Fox hunting should be banned just like dog fighting, cock fighting and bear baiting. When I visit local schools, I never find local schoolchildren pleading to keep fox hunting - quite the reverse!"

The MP added: "The Prime Minister's commitment is music to my ears. I want a nationwide ban with no opt outs."

Note to Editors: Frequently asked questions about foxes:

How do we control pest foxes? The best protection from predators for livestock such as free-range poultry is effective fencing. The RSPCA believes that, above all, humane methods should be used to control pest foxes. Where there is a proven problem, shooting at close range by a skilled shot is far more humane than the random pursuit and savaging by dogs of any fox which happens to be in the vicinity of the hunt. You do not have to declare war on a whole species because of individual fox problems. The problem of fox predation is frequently overstated, and the vast majority of lambs losses are due to cold, exposure and poor management - not foxes. The best scientific estimates suggest that lamb losses to foxes are less than one lamb per sheep farm per year, compared to 23 per year from other causes (cold, still births, starvation, accidents etc).

more follows

FOX HUNTING

Do many foxes suffer injuries at the hands of inaccurate shooting? There is little evidence that this is more than a rare occurrence. One can never guard against individuals recklessly injuring animals, but out of 1,693 sick and injured foxes collected by the RSPCA only one case was reported to have pellet injuries.

Does fox-hunting conserve hedgerows and coverts? There is a mistaken belief that many hedgerows are maintained to serve as obstacles for the hunt, and that small woodlands are maintained to provide sites for foxes to live and breed. Farmers are encouraged by Government to maintain hedgerows for the good of the countryside. The presence of organised hunting is completely unconnected. In a survey of 3,700 landowners, 'fox covert' was the least common reason given for retaining and planting small woods. There is no reason to believe that a ban on hunting would lead to the destruction of such features.

Can stag hunting with hounds be justified to conserve deer numbers? No. There are far more humane methods available. Culling of deer numbers is best done by a skilled marksman to minimise suffering. In Scotland, where stag hunting with hounds is banned, the deer population is managed by shooting. The cruelty of stag hunting is compounded in that the season (August to April) covers the period when many hinds are pregnant or have young with them.

Doesn't fox-hunting with hounds ensure a quick kill? First the chase is often lengthy. Stress alone causes suffering, and both horses and hounds can be injured in the course of the chase. The dogs will fight with the fox upon capture, with dogs disembowelling the fox by tearing open its underbelly. The image of one hound killing the fox instantly with a single bite to the neck is a myth. Also, many foxes are driven to ground followed by terriers trained to corner the fox or drive it from cover. Only then it is killed.

Wouldn't fox numbers escalate if foxhunting with hounds was made illegal? No. The total number of foxes killed by organised hunts is relatively small compared to the fox population. About 12,500 foxes are killed by hunts, compared to 100,000 killed by other means such as shooting. Naturally, the fox population will peak at about half a million in the summer months, and fall to half that figure in the winter. Fox numbers are largely self regulating, influenced like all wildlife by weather conditions, food supply and other natural factors. Indeed, the random killing of foxes and dispersal of family groups brings non-breeding vixens into breeding, thereby increasing numbers. Evidence suggests that fox populations can recover extremely quickly from losses as great as 70 per cent; the population being totally restored within one year. The evidence that organised hunting controls the fox population by killing significant numbers is not justified. Organised hunting with hounds remains an irrelevance in terms of pest control.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 176/99 Monday 12 July 1999

MP WELCOMES MAYOR TO WESTMINSTER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be rolling out the red carpet for Pendle's Mayor, Cllr Edwina Sergeant, when she arrives at Westminster on Wednesday.

The Mayor will be accompanied by the Mayoress, Cllr Dorothy Lord, Cllr Allison Brewer and Arthur Walker. The Mayor's Attendant, Jacqui King, completes the Civic party.

Every year in July, the MP hosts a Mayoral visit to Parliament which includes a tour of the Palace followed by dinner in the Churchill Room.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I am looking forward to the Mayor's visit. I always find the event hugely enjoyable."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 177/99 Thursday 15 July 1999

MP HAILS SUCCESSFUL SRB BIDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today congratulated everyone involved in putting together two successful bids which will
pour millions of pounds into Pendle over the next few years.

The MP said: "The "Opening Doors" bid prepared by Pendle Partnership was a very thorough piece of work and it deserved to succeed. The other bid prepared by the East Lancashire Partnership is just the tonic Pendle's rural areas need."

OPENING DOORS, UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES - PENDLE
This 7 year bid targets the five most deprived wards in Pendle to support community capacity building and enterprise, improve skill levels, health and access to jobs. There is an emphasis on tackling problems faced by the most socially excluded groups, particularly ethnic minority communities. A package of projects to improve housing and the environment will complement the social programme
Key Outputs: 365 jobs created/safeguarded; 2,000 people accessing employment through targeted assistance; 1,500 pupils benefiting from projects to enhance/improve attainment; 155 business start ups; support for 223 voluntary organisations and 30 capacity building initiatives; 90 private sector dwellings improved; 85 housing association homes built.
Costs: SRB YI: £379k SRB Total: £5,069k Scheme Total: £16m

ENTERPRISING RURAL COMMUNITIES, EAST LANCASHIRE
This is a seven year bid to address the key problems of the rural areas of North and East Lancashire - ie Pendle, Ribble Valley and Lancaster. Key activity includes provision of a network of 10 Community Resource Centres

(CRC) deep in rural areas; improvements to public transport and communications; outreach delivery of education, skills development; creation of new employment and businesses.
Key Outputs: 1O community resource centres; 155 jobs created/safeguarded; 175 people accessing employment through targeted assistance; 41 business start ups; support for 70 voluntary organisations and 14 capacity building initiatives; 18,000 sq m. of improved business/commercial floorspace.
Costs: SRB YI: £213k SRB Total: £3,737k Scheme Total: £12M
Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1"

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 178/99 Tuesday 13 July 1999

NORTHERN IRELAND - THE WAY FORWARD

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice is backing moves to establish a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "On 2 July the British and Irish government proposed a way forward to implement devolution and ensure the decommissioning of paramilitary arms."

The MP added: "The proposal also included a fail-safe should one of the parties fail to live up to its commitments. If commitments are not met, either in relation to decommissioning or to devolution, the governments will automatically, and with immediate effect, suspend the operation of the institutions set up by the Good Friday Agreement. The Bill before the Commons today implements the government's commitment to legislate to this effect.. We owe it to ouselves and the generations to come to reach a settlement which brings lasting peace to Ireland."

Notes to Editors: Under the way forward proposals, paramilitary groups will have to decommission in a manner laid down by the Independent Commission on Decommissioning. If it reports that a decommissioning commitment has not been met or a particular step set down by the Commission has not been taken, then the powers of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council will all immediately be suspended. In general the situation would revert to how it was before devolution - this will also occur if there has been a failure to meet a commitment relating to devolution. Should the fail-safe be triggered, the following procedure would be followed: i) Immediate suspension of the Executive, the other institutions and the powers devolved; ii) The Northern Ireland Secretary will convene a meeting of the assembly within a week to debate the new situation, but without a vote on the way to proceed; iii) A review, in consultation will all parties, will be undertaken by the two governments; iv) On conclusion of the review, a fresh Assembly debate on the way forward, with a vote on any proposed action.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 179/99 Tuesday 13 July 1999

BRIDGING THE GAP BACK TO LEARNING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed plans to give young people extra advice and guidance to help them choose what is right for them in terms of education and training post 16.

The MP said: “Too many young people are left floundering around, not knowing what to do with themselves - and what the options are - after 16. It is a big issue that needs to be addressed.”

The MP’s comments followed the publication today of the report from the Social Exclusion Unit into cross-government solutions to the problems of social exclusion of 16-18 year olds.

According to today's report, 160,000 youngsters are more likely to be unqualified, untrained, a teenage parent, or suffering from depression. Nearly three-quarters say they are using drugs and the report shows there are insufficient preparation in school for post-16 choices. It looks at how to improve currently available career advice, persuade teenagers to stay on at school or college, and to remove obstacles preventing them doing so.

Welcoming the report, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, accepted the proposal that secondary school children be offered personal advisers to stop them drifting into unemployment and crime. Children from 13 upward will be offered intensive careers and training advice with the establishment of a network of personal advisers. He said: "We simply cannot afford to stand by while another generation of young people ends up wasting the most important years of their lives and not getting the start and opportunity in life they deserve"

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for “GORDON 1” and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 180/99 Wednesday 14 July 1999

HUGE DROP IN TV LICENCE EVASION IN PENDLE

The number of people in Burnley and Pendle who have been watching TV without a licence has fallen dramatically over the past three years. In 1996/7 over 1400 people in the BB postal area were convicted of TV licence evasion but by 1998/9 this had dropped to 934.

The figures were revealed today by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, after he quizzed the Culture Minister and fellow East Lancashire MP, Janet Anderson.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I haven't met anyone who likes paying their TV licence fee but those who try to cheat the system push up the cost for the rest."

The MP added: "There are unfairnesses in the present system - especially for pensioners - and the Government is working on a way forward. No-one wants to see the pensioners penalised."

Note to Editors: The number of convictions for television licence evasion in the BB postcode area during the period in question was:

1996-97 1,414
1997-98 1,007
1998-99 934

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 181/99 Wednesday 14 July 1999

SEND ARTIFICIAL LIMBS TO SIERRA LEONE says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called on the Government to send artificial limbs to the victims of mutilation in the strife torn West African country of Sierra Leone. The MP told Foreign Office Minister George Foulkes that he was horrified by newspaper reports of dreadful mutilations inflicted on innocent people, including children.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Completely blameless people have had their hands chopped off simply because they found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. We must do everything we can to stop this barbarism and help those who are the victims of it."

The Minister told the MP: "We are not supplying artificial limbs to victims of mutilation in Sierra Leone. An EU-funded NGO (non governmental organisation), *Handicap International - Vivre Debout,* are working in Freetown and Bo to help victims of mutilations in this way. To date *Handicap International have* fitted 76 prosthesis. A joint project involving *Handicap International* and the Government of Sierra Leone demobilisation programme, which we are funding, has recently been agreed."

"We are also providing humanitarian assistance and support for reform of the judiciary and legal systems, the independent media, and reform of the police and security forces. Currently we are considering what more we can do to support the implementation of the peace agreement."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 182/99 Wednesday 4 August 1999

WORKING FAMILIES TAX CREDIT MEANS BIG BOOST IN INCOME says PRENTICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is launching a new campaign in Pendle to publicise the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) which will be introduced on 5 October. WFTC replaces Family Credit which had a poor take-up and provided little help with childcare costs.

Speaking from Colne earlier today, the MP said: "The Government's agenda to end child poverty includes the National Minimum Wage, reductions in National Insurance

Contributions, and record increases in Child Benefit. But the main initiative comes this October with the introduction of the new WFTC which will provide a good deal for Pendle's working families."

The MP continued: "The WFTC means a guaranteed take-home pay of £200 a week - £10,000 a year - for any family with a full time worker. No family with earnings of less than £235 a week - £12,000 a year - will pay income tax. The WFTC will provide an average of £67 per week to 1.5m families - an extra £24 per week on top of what people would get with the old Family Credit."

"Many families in Pendle and -170,000 - families in the North West will benefit from the WFTC. This reform, and others such as the National Minimum Wage will lift one and a quarter million people out of poverty - 800,000 of them children."

Note to Editors: Working families will see increased returns from work. The amount of benefit withdrawn as income increases - the taper - will be reduced from 70% in Family Credit to 55% in WFTC. The WFTC also helps with childcare costs. This is worth up to an extra £70 per week for families with one child and £105 per week for families with two or more children who pay eligible childcare costs.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 185/99 Wednesday 21 July 1999

MP TO MEET BAe CHIEFS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet John Weston, the Chief Executive of British Aerospace, tomorrow (Thursday) to discuss the future of the Military Aircraft division following the announcement last month that 2,200 jobs would be going in a major restructuring - including 882 at Warton.

On 24 June, the MP told the Commons the job losses were "incomprehensible" given the Government's go ahead for the Eurofighter Typhoon. The four Eurofighter partner nations are buying 620 aircraft: 232 for the UK; 180 for Germany; 121 for Italy and 87 for Spain. Production contracts for the first tranche of 148 aircraft, 55 of which are for the UK, were placed in September 1998. The total cost of the Eurofighter programme to the UK is estimated at £16.1 billion.

Speaking from Westminster in advance of tomorrow's meeting the MP said: "The Eurofighter project is a hugely expensive programme which has enormous economic significance for the North West region and for my own Pendle constituency. I want to

know what the effect, if any, the company's decision will have on BAe suppliers throughout the region."

Note to Editors: On 24 June 1999, the Site General Manager of the BAe site at Samlesbury wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: "As a company we are investing heavily in our engineering capability, advanced manufacturing processes and facilities in a continuous drive to improve productivity and maintain our position as one of the world's leading aerospace and defence companies...In manufacturing, we face the dual pressures of over-capacity and increasingly fierce competition....While clearly this is a major cost reduction programme, it is vital that we accomplish it successfully to maintain our - and Britain's - competitive edge in aerospace and defence at time of world-wide consolidation and ever more demanding customer requirements...."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 186/99 Wednesday 21 July 1999

MP IN BID TO BREAK DEADLOCK OVER KASHMIR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to lead a fact finding all Party Parliamentary delegation to Pakistan and India in September whose aim is to help break the deadlock over Kashmir which has poisoned for half a century the relationship between the two newly nuclear states.

Speaking at Westminster, following a meeting yesterday with the leader of the Pakistan People's Party, the former Pakistan Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, the MP said: "Kashmir could be the flash point for a nuclear conflict in South Asia and that must concern us all. The international community must find some way of brokering a settlement which everyone can live with. Kashmiris must be allowed to decide their own future."

The MP added: "Benazir Bhutto's clearly wants to find a way forward by, in her words, winning the hearts and minds of people on both sides of the India/Pakistan border. She told me she wants to encourage trade and commerce between the two countries and move away from what she described as the old rhetoric. She said the conflict in Kashmir was keeping international investment out of the region and impoverishing the entire area."

The MP concluded: "Britain has a long history with Pakistan and India. We should be well placed to help broker a settlement - given goodwill on all sides."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 187/99 Thursday 22 July 1999

GOVERNMENT TO ACT ON ONE DAY SALES

News today that the Government is to legislate to regulate one day sales has been welcomed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The Government has indicated that some of the practices associated with these sales should become criminal offences.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP told Industry Minister, Stephen Byers, that people in Pendle, as elsewhere, were sick to the back teeth of one day salesmen who are, quite literally, “here today and gone tomorrow”. The MP wanted one-day traders to be under a legal duty to notify in advance the local Trading Standards Office of when and where a sale is to take place.

Speaking from Westminster after the exchange, the MP said: “We need some of these one day sales people like we need a dose of anthrax. They rip people off mercilessly, preying on the unsuspecting and those out for a bargain. I am hugely encouraged that tough action is now going to be taken. It’s good news.”

Note to Editors: In February 1997, the Torquay based organisers of a one day sale held in the Marsden Community Centre in Nelson were forced to abandon the event after the intervention of the MP and four local Labour councillors. Dozens of people turned up for the 7pm sale, tempted by offers of Hitachi TVs and other expensive electrical goods at knock down prices. A 2 inch Casio television was advertised at £10. At the time, and speaking from outside the locked doors of the community centre, the MP told people to be on their guard. He said the organisers - Table Top Sales - were just like Table Top Marketing who came to the Great Marsden Hotel in October 1995 and ripped people off, "selling shoddy goods for inflated prices."

The MP raised concerns about these controversial one day sales in a Commons adjournment debate on 7 February 1996.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for “GORDON 1” and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 188/99 Monday 27 July 1999

MP WELCOMES ANNUAL REPORT

The Government's second Annual Report, published today, has been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP says it is a useful reminder of what the Government has done since 1997 - although it should also be regarded as a spur to further action.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Annual Report is an innovation. The previous Government had 18 occasions to tell us what they were up to but they clearly did not see it as important. For the Conservatives to criticise us now is a bit rich."

"We have made progress on the core pledges but much remains to be done. People need to see the changes on the ground. We are putting more money than ever before into health and education. We are supporting families with a record rise in child benefit. Two million people have gained from the minimum wage and youth unemployment halved with the New Deal. We also have the lowest mortgage rate for 30 years."

The Annual Report claims that Labour's manifesto set out 177 commitments, 90 of which have been delivered, 85 are in progress and only two have let to be timetabled.

The MP added: "Some of our political opponents say the report paints a glossy and partial picture. I don't believe that for a moment. Nevertheless, I wouldn't have any problems with a respected, independent and authoritative body presenting a report to Parliament - or a commentary on the Government's one."

"Our record - the good, the bad and the indifferent - is there for all to see. The Government's got nothing to hide."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following call sign "Gordon 1"

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 189/99 Monday 26 July 1999

MP DISHES THE DOME

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, wants the Dome to dish up regional favourites to the millions of people expected to visit the millennium landmark in Greenwich.

The MP told the Dome Minister and fellow East Lancashire MP, Janet Anderson, at Millennium questions today that the giant structure would have 37 restaurants with McDonalds opening its 1,000th UK outlet in the Dome. Warming to his theme, the MP asked the Minister: “But why can’t we celebrate the great culinary traditions of this country and savour all the regional delicacies?”

The Minister said there would be plenty of opportunity for visitors to taste traditional regional dishes in the Dome.

The Pendle MP raised the issue after expressing concern about cooking smells in the Dome - and how they were to be neutralised. The Minister said many of the kitchens would vent outside the Dome. Speaking afterwards the MP observed: “This is just as well. The aromatic clash of competing cuisines could have been a real turn off.”

The Pendle MP lists cooking as one of his relaxations.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 142/99 Tuesday 27 July 1999

MP WELCOMES WATER PRICE CUTS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed news of the cuts in water bills which are to feed through the pipeline to the consumer over the next five years. But the MP warned there should be no let up in the programme to replace worn out and leaky pipes.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The recent flash floods in Pendle underline the perils of complacency. The water companies need to invest in replacing an infrastructure which, in parts, dates back to the last century.”

The Director General of Water Services, Ian Byatt, said that cuts on average of 13.7 per cent for water and sewerage bills in England and Wales would be made in 2000-01.

The Deputy Prime Minister added: “We have always said that big cuts in water bills can and should go hand in hand with a big environmental programme. Today's announcement shows this is true. Last week OFWAT announced that water companies are on target and have cut their water leakage by over 20 per cent. This

means that 200 million gallons a day are now being saved - enough to supply all of Yorkshire Water's customers. And one of the first tangible benefits for consumers is that for the first year since 1993 we have the prospect of no hose pipe bans."

Note to Editors: Over the next five years, over 1100 schemes will be taken forward by water companies in England to improve sewage treatment, over 3800 intermittent discharges (storm overflows) will be improved, over 4200km of river length will be improved or protected and nearly 200 schemes will be undertaken to protect sensitive sites.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 143/99 Tuesday 27 July 1999

PARTY FUNDING "CLEAN UP" HAILED BY MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is enthusiastically backing proposals by Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to clean up the funding of political parties.

Under the plans put to the Commons this afternoon, only people registered to vote in the UK will be allowed to donate money to political parties and all donations over £5,000 at national level and £1,000 at local level would also have to be made public. The Bill would also establish an independent standing electoral commission with a brief to ensure electoral law is kept up to date and to guard against abuses.

At the last General Election the Conservatives reportedly spent £20m and Labour £14m.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "These proposals come as a breath of fresh air after all the years of sleaze. Shady foreigners donating huge sums to one political party in the UK is bad news for democracy. Our proposals will, at long last, put an end to that. The electoral commission is also to be welcomed. We have had numerous allegations in East Lancashire of abuses of the proxy voting system so I warmly welcome the arrival on the scene of a new independent electoral watchdog with teeth."

The MP added: "Under the last Conservative Government, sleaze enveloped the Houses of Parliament as completely and as comprehensively as the London fog of old."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 192/99 Tuesday 3 August 1999

NOTHING TO DECLARE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the announcement that the Government was scrapping the 100 year old quarantine regulations which separate travelling owners from their pets for months on end.

The so called "Passports for Pets" scheme only applies to cats and dogs who have been microchipped and have had an anti rabies inoculation. The pilot scheme only applies to travel between the UK and a restricted number of countries on the continent.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "New technology in the shape of the microchip has come to the rescue of holidaying pet owners. Dogs in particular have a hard time being separated from their best friend! Now, once they have their chip and jab they are free to come and go like the rest of us."

The MP added: "This is going to make a huge difference to the lives of millions of pet owners."

Note to Editors: The Ministry of Agriculture has set up a PETS help line for pet owners seeking information on 0181 330 6835.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for "GORDON 1" and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 193/99 Tuesday 3 August 1999

MP BACKS CCTV BID

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves to bring CCTV to Nelson. He is supporting a joint bid, put together by the local Council and Burnley and Rossendale, which would fund 13 cameras in Nelson. The MP has been an enthusiastic advocate for CCTV.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, the MP said: “It is good news that the local council is speaking with one united voice on this crucially important issue and that it supports the principle of CCTV. I am keeping my fingers crossed that this joint bid will succeed. I have already written to the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, calling for a slice of the new money for CCTV that is now available.”

If the bid succeeds, all the new cameras would have feeds to the monitoring station in Burnley.

The MP added: “We should embrace this technology which is demonstrably effective in deterring crime. It beats me why some people in the past have gone out of their way to put a spoke in things and stop it happening.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) ask for “GORDON 1” and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 194/99 Tuesday 3 August 1999

BARLICK GALA

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining in the fun of the fair at this Saturday’s Barnoldswick Gala.

The MP, who lives in the town, is a great supporter of the Gala which has been raising money for local charities for over a quarter of a century.

The MP said: “The Barlick Gala is always a great day out. The local round table who organise the event deserve a round of applause for making it happen. Organising a major event like this is a huge job.”

The procession leaves the Foster's Arms, Gisburn Road soon after noon. The opening ceremony takes place at 1.45pm on the Gala Field.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 195/99 Wednesday 4 August 1999

IN THE DOCK

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Lancashire next Tuesday (10 August) when he visits the Burnley CPS Branch - one of three in the county.

Since 1 April this year, the CPS has operated under a new structure of 42 geographical areas. The Lancashire Chief Crown Prosecutor, Dickie Dickenson, is based at the Preston Office.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, the MP said: "The CPS has an absolutely central role in ensuring the criminal justice system operates smoothly and quickly. They also have a responsibility to ensure that those who come into contact with the courts such as witnesses and victims are well looked after."

The MP added: "I am sure the new structure will deliver results. In the past, the criminal justice system has been bedevilled by delay and justice delayed is justice denied. We all want the courts to deal swiftly and efficiently with offenders."

"I am also concerned that prosecuting counsel - the barristers who act for the CPS in court - are fully on top of cases that are passed to them. We have all heard of barristers who pick up a brief minutes before entering the court and then wing it. That sort of practice is simply not good enough. I want to see full debriefings take place between the barrister and the CPS in all cases where, on all the available evidence, a conviction was confidently predicted but where a not guilty verdict was brought in."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 196/99 Thursday 12 August 1999

LITTLE CHANGE IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,671 (1,688 in June) - an unemployment rate of 4.9%. There were 1,274 men and 414 women out of work. The corresponding figures in June were respectively 1,271 and 400.

Nationally, unemployment has fallen to a new 19-year low and the numbers in work has hit a new high.

The Office for National Statistics confirmed the number of benefits claimants had fallen by 32,900 in July compared with June to 1,236,300, the lowest level since 1980. The number of people in work stands at a record 27,394,000.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: "The figures are encouraging. It is certainly good to see that here in Pendle there has been no upward drift in unemployment."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 197/99 Wednesday 4 August 1999

MP TO MEET ELTEC CHIEFS TO MAP OUT FUTURE ROLE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Mark Price, the Chief Executive of the East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council (ELTEC), next Wednesday (11 August) to discuss the Government's far reaching changes to skills and training provision.

Last month the Government published proposals for a big shake up of training with the introduction of a new framework for post 16 learning.

Speaking from Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "I know ELTEC is concerned - as we all are - about the state of manufacturing in East Lancashire and while we have gone through a difficult patch, I believe we have turned the corner. But for businesses to succeed they need well trained and highly motivated people and this is where the training providers come in. I think the present set up is overly complicated. I sometimes wonder how people - and young people in particular - find their way through it all."

Note to Editors: The White Paper, **Learning to Succeed,** has two paramount aims:

- to address a situation in which many people with low skills and poor qualifications are excluded from the benefits that learning can bring and locked into a cycle of disadvantage

- to rationalise a system which is characterised by incoherent and confusing structures for planning and funding, excessive bureaucracy, insufficient focus on skill needs, lack of innovation, inconsistent inspection standards and poor responsiveness to individuals', and employers', needs.

A new Learning & Skills Council (LSC) A new LSC for England will be established from April 2001 to drive forward improvements in standards
and bring greater coherence and responsiveness. The LSC will arrange

more follows

delivery of all post-16 education and training (except HE) and will assume
responsibility for:

- funding colleges (formerly responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council for England);
- advising the Government on the National Learning Targets (formerly responsibility of National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets);
- funding Modern Apprenticeships, National Traineeships and other Government-funded training and workforce development (formerly responsibility of Training and Enterprise Councils);
- developing, in partnership with LEAs, arrangements for adult and community learning;
- providing information, advice and guidance to adults; and
- working with the pre-16 education sector to ensure coherence across 14-19 education.

Key features will be:

- a system driven by the needs of the learner (a majority of Council members will be learning users - employers, individuals, local authorities, community representatives);
- two Committees of the Council: one with responsibility for young people; the other covering adult learners;
- a network of up to 50 local Learning and Skills Councils to provide local flexibility and accountability in order to match provision to meet local needs and priorities as set out on RDAs' regional strategies;
- local Learning Partnerships to ensure that the system is fully responsive to local partners and community needs;
- improved accountability, efficiency and probity.

Improving Quality The LSC will be responsible for developing and maintaining a quality improvement strategy. This will be underpinned by new rigorous, independent inspection arrangements. Coherence will be improved by unifying the inspection processes for young people learning in schools and colleges through to the age of 19 under OFSTED. A new independent

Inspectorate will be created to assess the quality of provision for adults and of all work-based training. The new Inspectorate will work closely with OFSTED to ensure a common approach to inspection.

Young People - broadening access, improving support Labour is committed to ensuring that far more young people continue in education and training through their teenage years until they are at least 19. To this end, we will shortly be publishing a strategy called 'Connexions' to ensure that the necessary support is in place to promote opportunity and tackle barriers to learning.

As part of this strategy there will be a new service which will improve the coherence of what is currently provided by the Careers Service, Youth Service and other specialist agencies. It will build on the success of the mentoring approach which we have pioneered through New Deal and Excellence in Cities. Organised on the same geographical areas as the local LSCs, the new service will provide a comprehensive structure of support

more follows

for all young people from the age of 13. The Social Exclusion Unit's forthcoming report on 16-18 year olds not in education, training or work will contain further detail of plans in this area.

From September, we will be introducing a Learning Gateway for 16 and 17 year olds who need extra support and guidance to benefit from mainstream learning.

We are issuing a separate consultation paper on sixth forms at the same time as the White Paper. Sixth forms are included within the planning arrangements. There is no question of any levelling down of funding for sixth forms or of imposing unnecessary bureaucracy on them. The present level of funding for any school sixth form will be maintained in real terms, provided student numbers do not fall.

Championing Adult Learning For the first time, one organisation (the LSC) will be responsible for delivering services to adult learners and for meeting Government targets.

Building on action already taken to increase lifelong learning opportunities by 20%, the LSC will work with other partners, including UfI, NIACE, the Campaign for Learning, Learning Partnerships, local authorities and broadcasters to promote and support learning throughout life.

Responsibility for work-based learning for unemployed adults will be transferred from TECs to the Employment Service from April 2001 so that it becomes part of a coherent set of programmes, alongside the New Deals and ONE.

Encouraging Learning Businesses Encouraging and helping businesses to invest in the skills and development of their workforce is of pivotal importance to the economy.

The LSC (at national and local level) will give employers unprecedented influence over the post-16 education system, promoting a better match between demand for, and supply of, skills.

The LSC will improve labour market and skills data and develop skills assessments and improvement strategies. These will build on relevant existing experience such as that of UfI or of trade union initiatives such as *Bargaining for Skills*.

Local LSCs will work in conjunction with the new Small Business Service to support local businesses in developing training plans, implementing Investors in People and help with recruitment for Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships. Businesses will be encouraged, individually and collectively to implement employee development schemes.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 198/99 Tuesday 3 August 1999

MP PAYS FLYING VISIT TO THE "COPPER CHOPPER"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be paying a flying visit next Tuesday (10 August) to the Lancashire Police Air Support Unit at Warton Aerodrome.

Two months ago, the MP quizzed the police about the use of the police helicopter "in the dead of night" over Barnoldswick - the town where the MP lives.

In a letter to Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, the MP complained the helicopter was hovering over the town at 12.45am bringing people in their night-clothes out onto the street to see what the commotion was all about.

He told the police Chief: "No sensible person would object to their sleep being disturbed if the helicopter were used to counter serious crime but surely its prolonged use over a built up area in the middle of the night for something fairly minor is quite another matter.'

The MP was told the helicopter has been used to make over 1,000 arrests since it was introduced in 1994. The police confirmed it was used for 30 minutes over Barnoldswick in the early hours of Thursday 9 June.

Speaking from his home in Barlick today, the MP said: "I am looking forward to meeting Inspector Steve Fitzgerald and the rest of his team."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 199/99 Wednesday 18 August 1999

COUNTY PLANS MAJOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED COLNE TO THORNTON IN CRAVEN BYPASS

Public consultation on the proposed A56 Village Bypasses is to get under way in October/November says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was speaking in Nelson following a meeting with transport chiefs at Preston on Monday (16 August). Proposals for a Colne Foulridge bypass have been "off and on" for years and have split local opinion down the middle. Now the proposal is to build a major bypass from Vivary Way to the A56 beyond Thornton-in-Craven skirting Colne, Foulridge, Kelbrook, Sough and Earby. The proposed bypass would cost in the region of £31m.

The MP said: "No-one believes any longer that we can build our way out of congestion. New roads inevitably attract new traffic and that is why the Government now insists on a new road appraisal system being put in place before tarmac covers green fields. We need to know the environmental impact of a new road as well as its alleged benefits in terms of the local economy and the well being of local people. In short, we need to know what will happen if we build a new road and what will happen if we don't."

The MP added: "The proposed bypass is one of four being worked up by the County Council. Lancashire's Provisional Transport Plan says "details of the amended Village Bypasses together with possible alternatives will be the subject of a public consultation towards the end of the year."

"It then goes on to say that the new roads appraisal "will take place once responses to the public consultation have been analysed and an appropriate strategy agreed". That seems to me

more follows

COUNTY PLANS MAJOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED COLNE TO THORNTON IN CRAVEN BYPASS

as if they are putting the cart before the horse. Although we now have the preliminary assessment of the pluses and minuses of the Village Bypasses, (see below in note 3 to editor) I suspect most people would want, as part of the public consultation, as much detail as possible. I will be speaking to the County's transport people about the whole process."

"The documentation makes it clear that the proposed bypass is rather more than a local road for local people. The bypass is seen as "a regionally significant route" and "part of the Primary Route Network". It admits that if it goes ahead there will be a moderate to severe impact on a sensitive landscape area."

Pendle Council's views are included as an integral part of the County's Local Transport Plan. The Council states: "Pendle considers that early construction of the Colne-Thornton Bypass is essential to relieve the unacceptable environmental

problems at the eastern terminus of the M65 (through Colne North Valley and the villages of Foulridge, Kelbrook and Earby." (p49. Vol. 3)

Note 1 to Editors: Lancashire County Council's Provisional Transport Plan for 2000/01 to 2005/06 has just been published. Paragraph 2.27 of the summary document (major Highway Schemes) reads: Policy 34 of the Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006 includes 27 schemes for the improvement of the highway network of the County. Some are completed. others abandoned and some transferred to new unitary authorities. Twelve major schemes, each costing over £5m, remain within Lancashire and it is necessary to determine which of these should be considered for inclusion in the first full Local Transport Plan.... Following a preliminary assessment of their value under the Government's New Approach to Appraisal (NATA) the following major highway schemes will be subjected to a full NATA assessment to determine which, if any, should be included in the Local Transport Plan:

• Heysham-M6 link
• A56 Village Bypasses
• Ormskirk Bypasses
• Penwortham Bypass

Note 2 to Editors: The LCC Provisional Local Transport Plan (Volume 3, East Lancashire) page 24 states: the A56 village bypasses at Colne/Foulridge/Kelbrook/Earby has been subject to considerable additional work. Following comments from Pendle Borough Council concerning the conditions on North Valley Road and in the centre of Colne the County Council undertook a detailed Origin and Destination survey in April 1999. The survey will be used to evaluate the traffic implications of a

more follows

COUNTY PLANS MAJOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED COLNE TO THORNTON IN CRAVEN BYPASS

number of short-term measures which have been suggested for Colne and
also to obtain up-to-date traffic data for the A56 Village Bypasses scheme. Details of the amended Village Bypasses together with possible alternatives will be the subject of a public consultation towards the end of the year. Assessment using NATA will take place once responses to the public consultation have been analysed and an appropriate strategy agreed.

Note 3 to Editors: Lancashire County Council Preliminary Assessment of Major Highways Schemes are based on five areas which mirror the Government's criteria for new roads assessment: Environmental Impact, Safety, Economy, Accessibility and Integration. This is how the A56 Village Bypass scheme shapes up:-

1. Environmental Impact: Moderate/severe impact on sensitive landscape area. Significant relief to built environment.

2. Safety: Reduced accidents. 1994-98 average was 11.0 per year on A6068 and 19.4 per year on A56

3. Economy: Significantly improved journey time reliability. Potential journey time savings 15-30 minutes.

4. Accessibility: Reduced community severance along North Valley Road and through Foulridge, Kelbrook, Earby and Thornton-in-Craven.

5. Integration: Will allow the extension of the Padiham/Colne primary bus corridor to Barnoldswick and Earby along existing A56. Scheme will include a parallel bridleway/cycleway.

The County adds: "In conclusion this is a regionally significant route as part of the Primary Route Network. The scheme is being developed in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 200/99 Wednesday 4 August 1999

MP WANTS LANDLORDS' WORD TO BE THEIR BOND

Landlords who hold on to a deposit or bond which is lodged with them by tenants moving into privately rented property should return the cash promptly when the tenant moves out says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Nelson today, the MP said: "The vast majority of landlords return the bond as soon as they have checked the property has been left in good order but there are instances here in Pendle where it is easier getting blood out of a stone than for a tenant getting their deposit back."

"I am in touch with the Housing Minister, Hilary Armstrong, about this issue. It rarely hits the headlines because individual tenants consider they have had bad luck with their particular landlord - but the problem, while not rampant, could be fairly widespread. I'd like to hear from tenants in the private sector who have had problems getting their own money back from landlords."

The MP added: "One solution could be for deposits to be held by a third party such as a solicitor. I am looking into it."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 201/99 Thursday 5 August 1999

<u>PHOTOCALL:</u> Gordon Prentice MP celebrating Pakistan Independence Day at Nelson Civic Theatre, Stanley Street Nelson on Sunday 8 August at 1.00pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be one of the guests of honour at Nelson Civic Theatre this Sunday to celebrate Pakistan Independence Day.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 202/99 Wednesday 11 August 1999

MP CHECKS OUT DESERTED VILLAGE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be taking time out this Sunday (15 August) to visit a village in his Pendle constituency with no voters!

The MP will be joining others curious about local history in a leisurely walk to the deserted medieval village of Stock, near Bracewell. The walk will be led by experienced archaeologists from the Lancashire County Archaeology Service and other local experts and is one of a series of Sunday afternoon visits to sites of special archaeological or historic interest.

The MP said: “There are quite a few deserted medieval villages in this part of the world and I am looking forward to hearing more from the experts.”

Note to Editors: Lancashire County Council Environment Directorate writes - The deserted medieval village of Stock forms the focus of this walk. Here it is possible to discern the earthworks representing hollow-ways, house platforms, tofts and crofts of a settlement probably abandoned by the 14th century. Other possible features include paddocks, barns, stock enclosures and industrial remains such as lime-burning kilns and quarries. Around the village are extensive areas of ridge and furrow, whilst slightly further afield is a rectangular earthwork enclosure on top of Hawber Hill. The enclosure has yet to be dated. The deserted village was always linked to neighbouring Bracewell where the main parish church lay. The walk will include a visit to the church of St Michael which contains 12th century fabric but is predominately 15th or early 16th century. Meet St Michael’s, Bracewell at 2.30pm. Walk length 4km.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 203/99 Sunday 8 August 1999

MP JOINS PAKISTAN INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, joined in the celebrations earlier today (Sunday) in Nelson's Civic Hall to commemorate the independence of Pakistan 52 years ago.

Speaking to a packed Civic Hall, the MP returned to the theme he outlined from the same platform two years ago - the 50th anniversary - when he said that Britain and Pakistan, with their long shared histories, were "old friends and modern partners".

The MP, who is leading a seven strong delegation of MPs to Pakistan and India next month in a bid to break the deadlock over Kashmir, told the audience he wanted to see both countries move up a gear in terms of trade and co-operation.

The MP said: "There are many challenges ahead. But a resolution of the long running dispute over Kashmir is the key to the greater prosperity of the whole of south Asia."

The MP said that education - especially for women and girls - was the pathway out of poverty and the UK had committed substantial sums to Pakistan from its overseas aid budget - £25m last year.

On the trade front, the MP admitted there was tremendous scope for boosting trade between the two countries given the long historic ties between them. "The UK is the 6th largest exporter to Pakistan - but for Pakistan we are only the 54th largest market."

"Pakistan with 130m people is a huge and growing market. We in Britain can benefit from increased trade - and so can Pakistan."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 204/99 Monday 9 August 1999

PRENTICE PAYS TRIBUTE TO NORTH WEST MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon paid tribute to fellow North West Labour MP, Roger Stott, 56, the veteran MP for Wigan who died in hospital last night after a period of ill health.

The Pendle MP said: “I knew Roger well - especially in my time as Chair of the North West Group of Labour MPs. He was a regular at meetings of the Group and he was always batting for the region. He will be remembered with great affection. He was popular and had a huge fund of amusing anecdotes straddling his long service at Westminster.”

The MP added: “He had a long involvement in Northern Ireland issues and I know he was keeping his fingers crossed - like the rest of us - that the peace process would bear fruit. We were talking about this only a few weeks ago in the Commons tea-room.”

Note to Editors: Roger Stott was a former Merchant Navy seaman and then a former telephone engineer before entering the Commons. He was PPS to the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan from 1976-79.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 205/99 Tuesday 10 August 1999

HELPING HAND FOR MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has an extra pair of hands at his constituency office this week in the shape of a student from Nelson and Colne College.

Victoria Rigg, who lives in Leeds Road, has just completed
3 A levels and hopes to go to Leeds University to do Development Studies and Politics. She wrote to the MP at Easter to ask if she could gain an insight into how a politician spends his time whilst in the constituency and the MP was pleased to oblige and invited Victoria to join him during the summer recess.

Victoria will have a busy timetable as Mr Prentice is taking her along to all of his constituency visits this week including the Crown Prosecution Service Office in Burnley, the Police Helicopter Headquarters at Warton, a meeting with ELTEC and a visit to Burnley Hospital to meet the Chief Executive of East Lancashire Health Authority.

Gordon Prentice said: “Not only is Victoria joining me on my visits she will also be doing some of the paperwork in the office for me such as research for forthcoming meetings. Victoria is going to experience at first hand a week in the life of an MP.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 206/99 Wednesday 11 August 1999

MP DROPS IN ON HELI- COPS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, and work experience student, Victoria Rigg, were at Warton Aerodrome yesterday to quiz police chiefs about the use of the force helicopter.

The two had been briefed by Inspector Steve Fitzgerald and were about to inspect the helicopter when it lifted off and disappeared in the direction of Pendle!

The MP said: “We had travelled over to Warton to hear more about the operational criteria used to commit the helicopter and, as luck would have it, it shot off to do a search for a missing person on Pendle Hill of all places.”

Two months ago, the use of the helicopter for half an hour in the dead of night over Barnoldswick - the town where the MP lives - caused consternation when townsfolk were woken up by the clatter. Many young people were sitting exams in the morning.

The MP added: “The police are clearly sensitive about the inappropriate use of the helicopter and I was assured it is never used for training purposes during the night. Since it was introduced in 1994 it has been responsible for over 1,000 arrests including 65 armed robbers and over 450 car thieves. The thermal imaging devices it carries lights up the night as if it were day. The criminals can run but they can’t hide. It is certainly a valuable weapon it the police armoury.”

Note to Editors: Before the Warton visit, the MP had complained to the Chief Constable “No sensible person would object to their sleep being disturbed if the helicopter were used to counter serious crime but surely its prolonged use over a built up area in the middle of the night for something fairly minor is quite another matter.’

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 207/99 Wednesday 18 August 1999

GOOD NEWS FOR NATIONAL BUS PENSIONERS

Pendle bus pensioners who used to be employed by the National Bus Company will be raising their glasses and toasting the Government when they learn of the decision to repay the surplus of their pension funds snatched from them by the last Government.

Retired bus drivers in Pendle who worked for the National Bus Company are among an estimated 5,000 in the North West who are just a short step away from receiving this money. There has been a long running battle to get back the money removed by the previous government from the Bus Employees Superannuation Trust (BEST) and National Bus Pension Fund (NBPF) but pressure from the pensioners, MPs and the Transport and General Workers Union is now bearing fruit.

Speaking from his constituency office the MP said: "I am delighted that at last the bus pensioners will be receiving this money. They have waited long enough. The Government has fulfilled Labour's commitment to justice and that has to be applauded."

Note to editor: After lengthy negotiations with the Trustees, the Government has offered a full and final settlement of £300 million for BEST and £55.77 million for NBPF. The Trustees will be recommending this to the beneficiaries, and will also be proposing the means of distributing.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 208/99 Friday 13 August 1999

TROUBLE MAKERS IN THE DOCK IN RECORD TIME

Home Office Minister Charles Clarke is asking local MP, Gordon Prentice, to pass on his appreciation to the Lancashire police for cutting the time taken to deal with young trouble makers from arrest to sentencing from 124 days in 1997 to 95 days last year.

Congratulating the Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, the Minister said: "It is easy for governments to criticise: we also believe in praise where it is due."

The Pendle MP commented. "Under the previous Government the average time for persistent young offenders to get from arrest to sentencing was 142 days - in many cases a lot higher. The Labour Government's target is an average of 71 days.

Last week, the Pendle MP visited Burnley Wharf, the home of the CPS in East Lancashire, and met the Chief Prosecutor, Dickie Dickinson and Susan Riley to talk about the recent changes to the youth justice system. The MP was particularly concerned to explore the relationship between the CPS and the police.

The Pendle MP added: "It is nothing short of a national scandal that under the previous government it could often take up to 5 months to deal with young offenders. That kind of dilatory and leisurely approach is simply not on. We are determined to bring in fast track justice."

Note to editors: In North Yorkshire the average time to get a young offender from arrest to sentence was 125 days in 1997 and this dropped to 109 in 1998.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 209/99 Friday 13 August 1999

ALL ABOARD FOR ROUGHLEE!

A £750,000 Government grant to Lancashire County Council to establish or develop existing rural buses has been welcomed by local MP Gordon Prentice.

In Pendle, an additional service is being introduced between Roughlee, Barley and Burnley. This will provide local people with a morning and late afternoon trip to and from Nelson and Burnley.

Lancashire County Council are looking to improve rural services. They want to throw a lifeline to rural communities that feel cut off. The new rural bus grant amounts to £750,000 a year for three years.

The new service will also be available to people in Newchurch and Fence which are included in the route. It will supplement the existing daytime service on Wednesdays and Fridays, and in addition to this there will also be three new evening journeys from Roughlee to Nelson on Fridays.

The Pendle MP said: "Lots of people, especially the elderly, rely on the bus and the Government is determined to help get vital rural services up and running."

Lancashire County Council's Environment Director is developing a 'Parish Contacts' scheme under which each rural Parish is invited to nominate someone to act as a link between the local community and the County Council.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 210/99 Wednesday 18 August 1999

SOFT DRINKS PRICES 'HARD TO SWALLOW' QUIPS MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the news that pubs and restaurants should come clean over the prices charged for soft drinks. The research includes looking into why soft drinks cost relatively so much compared to beer and lager and whether there is any link between prices charged and how clearly prices are displayed.

The MP said: "It staggers me to find out that a pint of lemonade can cost more than a pint of beer. In a society where we would like to see an end to the problems associated with drink-driving we should be doing more to give people a wide and cheaper choice of non-alcoholic beverages."

The MP continued: "It is not at all clear why the differences in prices between soft and alcoholic drinks should be so different from that charged in shops. The Government wants to establish the facts and the survey will allow them to do that. If part of the reason for the high prices is a lack of clear pricing then that is something that should be corrected."

Note to editor: The soft drinks survey and report is expected to be published in October. The report will allow comparisons to be made between regions and different types of soft drinks. The results will inform a review of the 'Food and Drink on Premises Order 1979' which regulates price display practices in pubs, restaurants and similar establishments. The intention is that a new order will be completed by September 2000

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 211/99 Wednesday 18 August 1999

MP BLASTS RACIST LEAFLET

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today condemned a letter that has been distributed in parts of Nelson purporting to come from 'The Homeless Asians Association'.

The MP said: "Like every right thinking person, I was sickened and disgusted when I was shown the letter. The people who distribute this sort of pathetic rubbish should feel the full weight of the law on them. They should know they are committing an offence."

The MP continued: "This country is rightly proud of its tradition of free speech however it is against the law to produce racist literature which actively seeks to encourage fear and mistrust of ethnic minority communities. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 creates the offence of sending letters with the intention of causing distress or anxiety and the maximum fine is £2,500."

Gordon Prentice added: "Trust and understanding built up over many years between communities here in Pendle, as elsewhere, can be eroded by the climate of fear and anxiety generated by this kind of racist literature."

The MP concluded: "We can do without this."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 212/99 Wednesday 18 August 1999

MP DISMAYED AT DECISION BY INDIA TO DEPLOY NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has reacted with dismay to news that the Indian Government is to deploy nuclear weapons “on land, sea and air.”

The announcement in New Delhi yesterday by India’s national security adviser, Brajesh Mishra, comes 15 months after India exploded a nuclear device. In May 1998 the Indians detonated three nuclear devices - the first underground nuclear tests for 25 years.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "This is very bad news indeed. It is in no-one’s interest to have a nuclear arms race in South Asia.”

“Any escalation by one side inevitably prompts a response from the other. I want to see India and Pakistan sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty now. Tomorrow could be too late."

The Pendle MP is leading a fact finding mission of Members of Parliament to Pakistan and India next month.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 213/99 Wednesday 25 August 1999

MP SEES RED OVER SLOW TRAIN TO PRESTON

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is today pressing Railtrack and the train operator, North Western Trains, to run an express service from Colne to Preston. The demand follows the publication of Railtrack’s latest Network Management Statement which gives the average times and speeds of trains travelling between Preston and Colne.

The MP said: “As we all know, the average journey time is a staggering 69 minutes - and that’s because the train stops at every station. This means that the train chugs along at an average speed of a mere 25 miles an hour.”

The MP continued: “I use trains a lot myself and am keen that others do the same but you can’t expect people to use a service which runs at snails pace. The service from

Colne has for too long been overlooked and I am pressing Railtrack and the train operators, North Western Trains, to get an express service going that will improve journey times and encourage people to use the train."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 214/99 Wednesday 25 August 1999

CANAL SAFETY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet with British Waterways Manager, Terry Horan, on Thursday of next week to discuss the future development of the Leeds and Liverpool canal which runs through his Pendle constituency. Specifically, the MP is keen to find out what can be done to improve canal safety following the tragedy this summer when a toddler from Nelson drowned yards from his home.

In August 1998 there was another appalling accident struck at a lock near Skipton, just over the North Yorkshire border, when 4 people with learning difficulties drowned when their holiday boat sank.

The MP said: "Every year we hear about canal accidents and drownings somewhere in the country. I want to be satisfied that British Waterways here in the North West is doing everything it possibly can to guard against these terrible tragedies."

The MP continued: "The 127 miles of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal make it Britain's longest canal. Many people base their leisure activities around the canal whether it is cycling along the towpaths, canal boating, angling or just strolling along the banks."

The MP said: "The canal is a great attraction to young and old alike and we need to do everything we possibly can to make sure they are safe places for people to spend their time."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 215/99 Thursday 26 August 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT BRIERFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE, COLNE ROAD, BRIERFIELD AT 11.00am WEDNESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 1999

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining Deputy Chief Constable of Lancashire, Mr Paul Stephenson, and members of Brierfield Town Council to witness the commissioning of the Brierfield CCTV system. The system has been up and running since July and has already helped with an arrest. Brierfield Councillors are hoping that the cameras will encourage new business into the town.

Speaking before the ceremony, the MP said: "CCTV is note a substitute for police on the beat - but the two in tandem will make criminals think twice."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 216/99 Thursday 26 August 1999

TOP MARKS FOR NELSON AND COLNE COLLEGE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has congratulated Kath Belton, Principal of Nelson and Colne College, her staff and students alike on the superb 'A' level results announced last Thursday.

The MP said: "These splendid results reflect well on the college. The results are well above the national average and the college continues to provide an excellent high standard of education for the young people of Pendle."

The Principal told the MP: “Our students have again performed exceptionally well, achieving a pass rate of 95%, 6.5% above the national average of 88.5%. Last year the College achieved a pass rate of 91.8%, 4% above the national average of 87.8%.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 217/99 Tuesday 31 August 1999

MP “OUTRAGED” AT COST OF CLAIMING “PRIZE”

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has today received a flyer at his home in Barnoldswick telling him that his name had been drawn by a computer in line to win a great prize. Great news! - all the MP had to do was ring the 24 hour claim line to find out whether he would be the proud owner of a brand new BMW or at least a telescope or 21” TV.

Getting excited now the MP was keen to know more but imagine his disappointment when the very small print at the bottom of the letter told him that to claim his prize he would have to make a phone call which would cost £1 per minute and could last up to 9 minutes.

The MP said: “The call would cost £9 and for what? One ‘prize’ is a ‘face care system’. I’d call that a bar of soap! Thousands of these flyers have been delivered throughout Pendle, mailed from Holland, telling people in large bright lettering that they are in line to win a car. What people may miss however is the small paragraph at the bottom of the letter giving the information regarding the cost of the phone call. The cost to claim the prize could easily cancel out the value of some of the prizes. I am very concerned that a lot of people would struggle to read the small print.”

The MP concluded: “I want to see important details on this sort of literature made big enough for the majority of people to read easily and not be conned into running up large phone bills.”

Note to editor: A copy of the notice is included.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or all 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 218/99 7 September 1999

MP WELCOMES LAUNCH OF WORKING FAMILIES TAX CREDIT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the launch of a campaign to draw attention to the Government's new Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) which will be paid from 5 October. WFTC is a new scheme, which has been specifically designed to give working families with children a better deal.

The MP said: "People need help to find out whether or not they are eligible and help to claim the cash to which they are entitled. For the first time, the WFTC will guarantee take-home pay of £200 a week or £10,000 a year for any family with a full time worker. No family with earnings of less than £235 a week - £12,000 a year - will pay income tax."

The MP continued: "A family earning £13,000 will be up to £50 a week or £2,500 a year better off, and the WFTC will provide an average of £67 per week to 1.5 million families - an extra £24 per week on top of Family Credit, which it is replacing."

The MP finished by saying: "The new scheme will provide a better deal for Pendle's working families and I urge anyone to thinks they will be eligible to call 0800 597 5976 to find out more."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 219/99 Monday 20 September 1999

MP TELLS RAMBLERS: "WE'RE ON THE HOME STRAIGHT"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told ramblers yesterday they were on the home straight in the campaign to open up the countryside to walkers.

The MP, whose Right to Roam Bill earlier this year pushed the issue to centre stage, told a big rally of Ramblers in Howarth that he expected legislation to guarantee access to be included in this year's Queen's Speech in November.

The packed meeting in Howarth Community Centre in Butt Lane Howarth - which was one of 25 "Access Day" rallies held around the country - also heard from Paul Truswell, the Labour MP for Pudsey, and Jerry Pearlman, the Rambler's legal adviser who helped the Pendle MP on the technical drafting of the Right to Roam Bill.

The Pendle MP told the rally: "The Government is now pledged to bring in a statutory right of area access to over 4 million acres of some of the most beautiful countryside in England and Wales. The Government now recognises the voluntary approach which has been tried for half a century simply has not worked."

"The right to roam is enormously popular. A recent NOP poll showed that 85% of the public wanted to see a statutory right to roam with common-sense restrictions to protect the environment, crops and animals."

"Millions of people are fed up sneaking and creeping around our own countryside. We are brainwashed into believing we cause damage wherever we go. Apologising for the harm we allegedly

more follows:

MP TELLS RAMBLERS: "WE'RE ON THE HOME STRAIGHT"

do by our mere presence."

The MP said: "We are told the landowners are the true guardians of the countryside. They are holding it in trust for tomorrow. Everyone else is a wrecker. But walkers and ramblers haven't poisoned the countryside with pesticides. We have not polluted the water course. We have not silenced the countryside as the birds have perished. We have not grubbed up the hedgerows damaging biodiversity. And we have not sold green fields for development."

Before the Ramblers set off on three walks over the Bronte Moors and Boulsworth Hill, the MP told them: "Open, uncultivated countryside is not the personal fiefdom of the country landowners. The land is our land for all of us to share and to enjoy."

"I am the first to acknowledge that there are many very good reasons for keeping people off land - animals could be breeding there or birds nesting or delicate habitats need to be preserved. But the mere fact of ownership, of itself, is not a sufficient reason. Many landowners cannot and will not accept that proposition."

"That is why we need to change the law" he said.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 220/99 Tuesday 21 September 1999

UK ECONOMY SET TO GROW says PRENTICE

The British economy now has the potential to reach the upper end of the Government's growth forecasts says local MP, Gordon Prentice. He says this will mean rising living standards for people in Pendle as elsewhere and more cash for public services.

Speaking from Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "The Government elected two years ago had a very difficult inheritance. When we came in to office, inflation was set to rise sharply above target. Borrowing had risen to £28 billion and the national debt had doubled. And who can forget that in the late 1980s and early 1990s we saw interest rates rise to 15% for a whole year."

"The Government has cut borrowing by £31 billion in its first two years, and the money we would have spent servicing debt is now available to spend on the things that really matter such as health and education."

The MP added: "As a result, we now have a sound platform on which to build for the future. Inflation is historically low and expected to remain close to target; and interest rates peaked at half their early 1990s level and have fallen from 7% to 5%. Mortgage rates are their lowest for over 30 years."

"Employment is up by over half a million since the election, with more people in work in Britain today than ever before. Youth unemployment is down by over 60%, and long-term unemployment is down by over 50%."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 221/99 Wednesday 22 September 1999

ROGUE LANDLORDS TOLD TO PAY UP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has won a commitment from the Government to clamp down on rogue landlords who refuse to return deposits to tenants at the end of their tenancy.

The MP said: "The vast majority of landlords return the bond as soon as they have checked the property has been left in good order but there are instances here in Pendle where landlords hang on to the cash. I pursued this matter with Nick Raynsford, Minister for Housing, after a number of complaints from exasperated constituents. They were at their wits end, trying to get their money back. In some cases, up to £800 was withheld for no good reason."

The MP continued: "The Government has promised a pilot scheme where tenants' deposits can be held safely with an independent arbitration service to deal with disputes. This will be up and running early next year. However, I want to see the scheme introduced throughout the country at the earliest opportunity."

Note 1 to Editors:
The letter from the Minister to the Pendle MP reads - 'The Government is concerned about the problem tenants face in getting their deposits returned. Tenants should not be losing part or all of their deposit at the end of the tenancy and they certainly deserve a proper explanation from their landlord if they do so.
We have looked at legislation operating in other countries to see whether it could be used as an appropriate model for dealing with the problems in this country. In Australia, for example, there are compulsory schemes under which the deposit and the resolution of disputes about who has best claim to it at the end of the tenancy are managed independently. However, before considering a similar arrangement in England, which would require legislation and would entail some bureaucracy, we want to see whether we could achieve similar results by voluntary means.

more follows....

ROGUE LANDLORDS TOLD TO PAY UP

We are therefore proposing a voluntary, self-financing scheme to ensure that tenants' deposits are held safely and to provide an independent arbitration service to deal with disputes. Meetings have recently taken place between the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, landlord and tenant organisations with the aim of starting a pilot scheme early next year. It has been made clear that if such a scheme does not succeed we will consider legislating for a compulsory scheme.'

Note 2 to Editors: The MP voiced his concerns with local landlords at a meeting in Nelson in June.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 223/99 21 September 1999

LITTLE CHANGE IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,689 (1,671 in July) -
an unemployment rate of 4.9%. There were 1,268 men and 421 women out of work. The corresponding figures in July were respectively 1,271 and 400.

Nationally, unemployment has fallen to a new 19-year low and the numbers in work has hit a new high. The Office for National Statistics confirmed the number of benefits claimants had fallen by 22,300 in August compared with July, the lowest level since 1980. The number of people in work stands at a record 27,410,000.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: "The fact that the unemployment rate in Pendle remains well below the national average of 5.9% is good news. Manufacturing remains the main sector to have experienced a fall in employment over the past year however new vacancies, especially within the services sector, are slightly up."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 227/99 Tuesday 5 October 1999

JOHN WILMAN CLOSURE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says Nelson will be hard hit by the closure of the factory and offices of John Wilman. The parent company, Gleadway plc, has

announced the closure will take place at the end of 1999 with all the activities relocated to Hyde.

The MP said: “This is dreadful news. The company blames the downturn in sales of wallcoverings across the entire industrial sector which it claims is suffering from chronic over capacity.”

“I shall be seeking a meeting with the company to see what, if anything, can be salvaged from this decision.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 228/99 Wed 22 September 1999

MP TO VISIT AMBULANCE HQ

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Lancashire Ambulance Service Chief Executive, David Hill, tomorrow Thursday (23 September) at 12.30pm at his Preston HQ to discuss possible changes to the service. Options floated by the NHS Executive North West suggest the four ambulance trusts serving the region could be reduced to two or even one.

At present, the North West Region uses the services of four ambulance trusts: Mersey Regional Ambulance, Greater Manchester Ambulance, Cumbria and, finally, Lancashire. The NHS Executive is exploring the case for merging at least some of these.

Speaking before the meeting, the MP said: “We all have a shared objective - to see our health service deliver top quality care in the most efficient way possible. I have an open mind on the possible future configuration of the ambulance service. Change for the sake of it is never a good idea. It can be very destabilising. But if there are positive benefits, then let’s hear about them.”

The MP visits the nerve centre every year "to take a heath check on the service". He last visited in September last year.

Note to Editors: The Lancashire Ambulance Service was one of the first ambulance services in the UK - other than a small number of pilot sites - to prioritise its response to 999 calls. It is working to the new Patient's Charter Standard which requires ambulance services to respond to 75% of life threatening calls within 8 minutes by 2001. Last year it was selected as one of only three pilot sites in the country operating "NHS Direct" ands although this service is currently only available in Preston,

Chorley and South Ribble it is hoped to extend the service throughout Lancashire as part of the programme to cover the whole of the country by the year 2000.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 221/99 Tuesday 21 September 1999

THE EURO

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to lead a discussion on "the Euro" at a meeting of the Barnoldswick Labour Party this evening.

Last March, the MP welcomed the publication of the Outline National Changeover Plan to prepare the UK for the Euro - should the people decide in a referendum to join. At the launch of the new currency on 1 January, the MP said the Euro would have an enormous impact on the UK - "whether we are in or out".

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "The Government's position is crystal clear. We would consider joining the Euro if it is in the UK's economic interests and no decision would be made without going through the "triple lock" procedure - a recommendation from the Cabinet, a majority vote in Parliament and, finally, the consent of the people in a referendum."

The MP added: "The key test is whether the Euro is good for Britain. It is that simple. But even if we were to remain outside the Euro Zone, we will be affected by it. For example, it will be possible for people to open Euro bank accounts and to make use of financial services. The single market includes financial products - such as insurance and mortgages - as with consumer goods and other non financial services."

Note to Editors: On 27 October 1997 the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the Government's policy on the European single currency. He said he would publish details of how, should it choose to do so, Britain could join the euro. This became know as the National Changeover Plan. In his statement he made clear the Government's view that membership of a successful euro would bring benefits to Britain in terms of jobs, investment and trade. And he set out the conditions necessary to satisfy our national economic
interest.

more follows

Because of the magnitude of the decision, the Government believes - as a matter of principle - that whenever a decision to enter is taken by the Government, it should be put to a referendum of the British people. Government, Parliament and the people must all agree.

The Government has set out five economic tests which will have to be met before any decision to join can be taken:

whether the UK economy has achieved sustainable convergence with the economies of the single currency;
whether there is sufficient flexibility in the UK economy to adapt to change and other unexpected economic events;
whether joining the single currency would create better conditions for businesses to make long-term decisions to invest in the UK;
the impact membership would have on the UK financial services industry; and
whether joining the single currency would be good for employment.

These tests are challenging. Barring some fundamental and unforeseen change in economic circumstances, making a decision during this Parliament to join is unrealistic. But preparations should be made in this Parliament so that, should the economic tests be met, a decision to join a successful single currency can be made early in the next Parliament. Without preparation, it is not a practical option. The British people should be in a position to exercise genuine choice.

If we wish to have the option of joining, we must prepare. The sheer nature, scale and complexity of the arrangements require considerable time for such preparation. It is, for example, far more detailed in its consequences than decimalisation. If we do not start to face this reality now, we will simply not have the practical means necessary to make a choice.

This plan represents a snapshot of where preparations stand today on the practical aspects of possible UK entry to the single currency. The Government has already worked intensively with the business community and the public sector to ensure that the necessary preparations were in place to deal with the euro from 1 January 1999, and to understand the practical steps that the UK would need to take during a changeover to the euro. This plan summarises the work done so far, and the work planned for the future.

The Outline Plan shows that it is possible to streamline the timetable adopted in Europe, with no disadvantage to our economy and some benefit. Overall we believe it should be possible to move: •in 4 months from a Government decision to a referendum; •in 24-30 months from a positive referendum result to the introduction of notes and coins; •and a further six months before sterling notes and coins are withdrawn.

This means that the whole process from a positive referendum result to the withdrawal of sterling could be completed in around three years, considerably faster than the period required for the first wave of EMU participants.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 230/99 Wed 22 September 1999

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR A RURAL REVIVAL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to tell the Labour Party's "Rural Revival" group that the Government must "roll up its sleeves" and tackle the decades long decline in rural services.

The MP will be speaking to delegates in Bournemouth on Monday as the Labour Conference gets under way.

Speaking before leaving for Bournemouth, the MP said: "Under the Conservatives, people living and working in the countryside got a raw deal. Bus services disappeared. Village post offices closed down. Local people often found it impossible to find a house in areas in which they had grown up - they were priced out of reach. Jobs and services are the things that matter. These will be at the heart of the Government's Rural White Paper, due out soon."

"Agriculture is a key element in the rural economy and some farmers have had a hard time. The Government has recognised this and on Monday announced special help to tide them over."

The MP added: "The Government wants to see a living, working countryside. The people who will come to Bournemouth next week to demonstrate against the Government's polices on foxhunting or the right to roam are not the representatives of the millions of people who live and work in rural Britain."

"The Countryside Alliance represents a bundle of narrow sectional interests. They have the right to speak for themselves - and we shall listen - but not to claim they speak for millions of others."

Note to Editors: Support Package for Farmers: The package provides short term assistance for those most in need in the livestock sector, particularly those who farm marginal land. This package is in addition to the £270

more follows

million which the Labour government has announced over the past two years. The details of the package are:

* An additional £60 million to maintain the Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances at 1999 levels (up 50% on the previous year). This will directly benefit farmers in the hills, who are the bedrock of the livestock industry but who are among those facing the most difficulty now.

* Charges for Specified Risk Material (SRM) inspections will be deferred for the next three years until 2001/02. These costs do not fall on our industry's competitors and are a part of our programme to restore confidence in the meat market in the wake of BSE. And Charges for cattle passports will be deferred for the next three years until 2001/02. These two measures will save the industry £89 million over the next three years.

* An additional £1 million for 1999-2000 will be available to assist other parts of the industry. This will help primary producers improve their marketing, collaboration and competitiveness, focusing principally on those least helped by the other measures already announced.

In addition the government recognises the impact that increases in the

value of sterling has had on the value of CAP payments to UK farmers. This is why we fought hard in December last year for a realistic compensation scheme following the adoption of the Euro. This year we have put a number of schemes to the Commission to ensure that 1999 CAP direct aid payments to UK farmers are protected. To date the Commission has approved:

* £32 million for sheep farmers, most of which was paid earlier this summer.
* £62 million for beef farmers, with advances starting in November.

We hope to hear shortly from the Commission on an additional £164 million for arable farmers on which we hope to start payment in February.

All of these schemes will continue at reduced rates over the next two years, worth in total a further £129 million to the UK farming industry.

These measures should be seen in the context of the very considerable support that the livestock sector already receives. Over £1 billion in direct payments was already going to beef and sheep farmers this year and as a result of the package agreed in the Agenda 2000 reform of the CAP these payments will increase by almost £130 million.

The Government's overall approach to agriculture policy is to continue to press for reform of the CAP to bring farmers closer to world markets, thereby safeguarding the long term future of the industry. In doing so it seeks to shift aid to farmers away from production based subsidies and price supports that promote over-production, inefficient use of resources and create market distortions. Instead, the Government wants to see greater use of forms of publicly funded assistance that recognise the wider public benefits that farmers create in rural areas.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 231/99 Wednesday 22 September 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT THE PENDLE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL ANNUAL FETE, LEEDS ROAD, NELSON ON SATURDAY 25 SEPTEMBER AT 12.00noon.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining the Friends of Pendle Community Hospital at their Annual Fete this Saturday.
The MP said: “I always look forward to this event and am happy to supprt this fund-raising event.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 232/99 Wednesday 22 September 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT EARBY ANNUAL AUTUMN FAIR, NEW ROAD COMMUNITY CENTRE, EARBY ON SATURDAY 2 OCTOBER AT 12.00 noon.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining members of New Road Community Centre, Earby at their Annual Autumn Fair on 2 October. Along with the usual stalls there will the dedication of the Millenium Clock and the Grand Calendar Draw.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 233/99 Tuesday 12 October 1999

AWARDS FOR ALL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, was delighted to learn that a local organisation has obtained a grant from the Millennium
Awards for All programme. Pendle Divers Sub Aqua Club provide Nautical Archaeology and diver training and social pleasure diving and the money will be used to train instructors and also purchase a resuscitation dummy.

The MP said: “The Millennium Festival Awards for All is a new Lottery funding programme to help support local groups who have plans to celebrate the Millennium.

It aims to fund projects that involve people in the local community and bring them together to enjoy arts, charities, sports and heritage activities."

The MP continued: "I am delighted that the Pendle Divers Sub Aqua Club has been a recipient of the lottery fund. Small sums of money can have a big impact. In this programme grants of between £500 and £5000 can help groups that often find it difficult to raise funds to extend their activities."

Note to Editor -Applications for the Millennium Festival Awards for All are sought from local groups who are planning activities to mark or celebrate the Millennium and are being considered up until June 2000. Requests can be made for new work taking place with the Millennium in mind or may involve developing existing projects for the Millennium. Application packs can be obtained by ringing 0845 600 20 40

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 234/99 Wednesday 13 October 1999

FALL IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,525 (1,689 in August) -
an unemployment rate of 4.4%. There were 1,135 men and 390 women out of work. The corresponding figures in August were respectively 1,268 and 421.

Nationally, unemployment has fallen again since August and the numbers in work has hit a new high. The Office for National Statistics confirmed the number of benefits claimants had fallen by 5,400 in September compared with August. The number of people in work stands at a record 27,460,000.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: "The figures for Pendle are encouraging and demonstrate the national trend of people moving from welfare into work."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 235/99 Wednesday 20 October 1999

MP GOES 'MADD' ON SATURDAY
PHOTOCALL - Gordon Prentice MP at Morrisons
Re-Cycling Bank, Nelson at 3.00pm on Saturday 23 October

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is taking part in the Make A Difference Day 99 as part of the UK's biggest single day of volunteering organised by national charity Community Service Volunteers (CSV).
To mark the day Mr Prentice will be joining some of his constituents in a mass re-cycling effort at Morrisons Supermarkets re-cycling bank, Nelson this Saturday.

The MP said: "Make A Difference Day is about using your time and energy to get something done in your local community. Organising an activity, such as re-cycling, which is simple and easy to do, can make a difference in promoting environmentally friendly activities."

The MP continued: "I am very keen for everyone to use the re-cycling facilities that are provided by the local council and I am happy to promote their use as part of the MADD day."

There are recycling banks on most Supermarket car parks and public car parks for glass, paper, cans, textiles, books and shoes. The number of sites is to increase this year from 10 to 30 in total.

Note to Editor: CSV is the UK's leading volunteer organisation and creates opportunities for people to play an active part in the life of their community through volunteering, training and community action. Make a Difference Day began in 1996 and has grown into the largest single day of volunteering in the UK. last year 20,000 volunteers supported the day.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 236/99 Wednesday 20 October 1999

CCTV SUCCESS FOR PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is delighted that the bid from Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale partnerships for Closed Circuit Television has passed its first and major hurdle. The MP has campaigned long and hard for CCTV and just recently wrote to Jack Straw to press the case. He pointed out that smaller towns in East Lancashire were often overlooked and that money from Central Government seems always to go to the inner cities. He also said that both business and the majority of the public in Pendle desperately wanted to see cameras in their town centres and were pinning their hopes on this bid.

Gordon Prentice said: "The news that the bid has been successful at this initial stage is marvellous and it proves that with a good case and perseverance, success can come. The Partnerships involved in the bid have now been invited to prepare fully worked-out proposals and the final funding decision is to be made later in the year."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 238/99 Wednesday 27 October 1999

MP TO HONOUR LOCAL COUNCILLOR
Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP to present certificate to Cllr Frank Hartley

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 239/99 Tuesday 2 November 1999

"KNOW YOUR RIGHTS" HOTLINE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the latest initiative from the TUC designed to make people aware of the new rights they have now the Employment Rights Act is law.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government has given people in work important new rights and a simple call to 0870 600 4 882 will provide information on 26 new rights that are in place now or are to come in next year. This is a splendid idea from the TUC and this sort of thing has my full support."

The line is open every day from 8am to 10pm and calls are charged at the national rate.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 240/99 Thursday 21 October 1999

MP DUBS PAKISTAN MILITARY COUP 'DEPLORABLE'

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has condemned the military takeover in Pakistan. Earlier this month, General Pervaiz Musharraf ousted the civilian Government led by Prime Minster Nawaz Sharif.

Speaking in the Commons this afternoon, the Pendle MP - who visited Pakistan only last month - called on the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, to arrange an early debate on the situation in the troubled country.

The MP told the House: “For half its short history, Pakistan has been ruled by the military - and they are back again. I visited Pakistan with four Parliamentary colleagues and just escaped being caught up in the coup. Ministers we met are now under house arrest.” The MP continued: “Even if the new regime is benign it is absolutely deplorable that a civilian Government elected only a few years ago should be ousted by the military.”

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “I was as plain as a pikestaff when I was over there that the Government was coming under fire for many of its policies. Many reports pointed to the depth of the Prime Minister’s unpopularity, witnessed by the absence of any demonstrations against the coup.”

“Unfortunately, the roots of democracy are still shallow in Pakistan. If a Government is unpopular, the answer is to kick it out in a democratic election. Pakistan’s formidable problems haven’t gone away. The military still have to grapple with them.”

Note to Editors: Last month, the IMF suspended a £170 million tranche of a £945 million loan because the Sharif government had failed to comply with its conditions. Some £300 million of World Bank money is also blocked.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign Gordon 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 241/99 Tuesday 26 October 1999

MP URGES RE-THINK ON GOVERNMENT’S PLANS TO PRIVATISE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged the Government to back off from its plan to privatise air traffic control.

On the last day before Parliament’s summer recess, the Government announced it intended to turn NATS (National Air Traffic Services) into a “public private partnership”.

Speaking in the Commons this afternoon, the MP told newly appointed Environment Minister, Chris Mullin, that air traffic over Britain was forecast to grow at an annual rate of 4.5% until 2015. He told the Minister the Government should not compromise safety in the skies especially at a time when a huge increase in aircraft movements was expected.

The MP said: “The air traffic controllers don’t want privatisation. Neither does the airline industry. Nor, so far as I can gather, does the Labour Party. Did we get it completely wrong when we told the Conservatives in 1996 that “our air was not for sale”?

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “I simply don’t know why we are doing this. NATS has arguably the best safety record in the world. No country has privatised its air traffic control - not even the USA. I want to see air traffic control remain firmly in public ownership. To do otherwise is to take a big gamble with safety.”

Note to Editors: The DETR in 1997 forecast air traffic growth. International traffic was expected to grow at a similar rate to total traffic - at an annual rate of 4.5% between 1995 and 2015... Short haul traffic is expected to grow at 4% a year over the same period, considerably less than long haul which is expected to grow at an annual rate of 5.5%

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 242/99 Tuesday 26 October 1999

MP BACKS FRESH BID FOR EURO CASH

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today threw his weight behind moves to secure additional European cash for two of Pendle’s most deprived wards - Whitefield and Bradley.

The MP is lobbying Environment Minister, Hilary Armstrong, and Industry Secretary, Steve Byres, to back the case put forward by Pendle Council for including the two wards in the map of the UK’s proposed Objective 2 areas - which is currently being considered by the European Commission..

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Areas designated as “Objective 2” will have access to European funds. So its important. The original submission from the North West Development Agency and the NW Regional Assembly - purporting to be on behalf of the region’s local authorities - didn’t do East Lancashire any favours. We are now trying to put that right.”

The proposed North West objective 2 areas map went to the government here in the UK before being sent on to the European Commission on 2 October. The Commission is expected to form a view next month.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 243/99 Wednesday 27 October 1999

HUGE FALL IN INFANT CLASS SIZES IN LANCASHIRE

A huge drop in the number of infants taught in class sizes of more than 30 means the Government will deliver its class size pledge a year ahead of schedule says Pendle MP Gordon Prentice.

Figures from Lancashire show a dramatic improvement with the percentage of pupils in classes of over 30 dropping from 36% in September 1998 to 10% in September this year. The number of youngsters in classes of 30+ plummeted from 14,072 to 3,558 over this period.

Over the country, figures released today show that the number of infants being taught in class sizes of more than thirty halved in a single year from 22 per cent to 11%, a drop of 173,000 pupils.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “There are now only 181,000 infants in class sizes over 30, a third of the total when the Government came to power. Labour is investing £600 million to reduce this figure to zero by 2001. 300,000 infants have benefited so far.”

“Under the previous Government, class sizes rose inexorably. We acted swiftly and increased spending by £835 million - a real per pupil increase of £73 each. Our youngsters are now benefiting.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 244/99 Wednesday 27 October 1999

MP “REPELLED” BY SEWAGE SLUDGE IN ANIMAL FEED

Revelations that sewage sludge has been used in animal feed in France have shocked local MP Gordon Prentice who dubbed the practice “absolutely repulsive”. Speaking from Westminster earlier today he said the practice of using sewage sludge in animal feed is both unacceptable and illegal and the book should be thrown at the French Government.

The MP said: “It beggars belief that this sort of thing has been going on. It is enough to turn the French - and everyone else who has been eating the stuff - into rampant vegetarians. I want to see this revolting practice ended now. It is totally unlawful.”

Note to Editors: European Commission formally raised the issue of contaminated animal feed with the French in mid-August and sent in a team of inspectors. The report from the Commission confirmed allegations of illegal practices, although many of these had been addressed. UK Government has considered the implications of this for UK public safety and consulted its independent scientific advisers. The advice is that there is no immediate risk to public health, and no public health justification for a ban on French products.

On 14 July the European Commission agreed that exports of British beef under the Date-Based Export Scheme could begin as from 1 August. All EU member states except France and Germany lifted their national bans by early August.

As it stands, the import of British beef into France is prohibited by French law. A recent French law required that the French Food Standards Agency (AFSSA) opinion be sought before the French Government could lift the ban. On 1 October AFSSA delivered a negative opinion and the French Government has suspended the lifting of the ban. The French sent the basis for their decision to the Commission, who referred it to a sub-committee of the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) on 14 October. It will go to the full SSC on 28 October. The Government is confident that the French dossier contains no significant new evidence.

more follows

MP “REPELLED” BY SEWAGE SLUDGE IN ANIMAL FEED

The Government has the assurance of Commission President Prodi that the Commission will begin legal proceedings against France if the scientists agree that France has submitted no new substantive evidence to support their case, and France persists in maintaining its ban. Britain also has the option of bringing its own legal proceedings.

BSE is in decline. The number of cases this year is down 47 per cent compared to two years ago. Britain has implemented a comprehensive set of precautionary measures that ensure British beef is amongst the safest in the world.

The beef on the bone issue is separate from the illegal French ban. The Date Based Export Scheme approved by the European Commission is for de-boned beef only.

The UK Chief Medical Officer has recommended lifting the beef on the bone ban for retail sales. It is the Government's firm intention to lift the ban in an orderly way, on a UK-wide basis. The Government hopes this will be possible once the Government's CMOs have considered new evidence from Professor Anderson's study that is due in mid-November. Acting now to lift the ban in England would create uncertainty for consumers and for the beef industry.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 247/99 Tuesday 2 November 1999

BARLICK BENEFITS AGENCY OFFICE STAYS IN TOWN

Campaigning MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the official announcement that the future of the Benefits Agency Caller Office in Barnoldswick is secure after years of uncertainty. The Agencies regional HQ in Manchester has told the MP that the Office in Barnoldswick would now be staying open and they were looking at making the existing building more suitable.

Over two years ago the Benefits Agency first got in touch with the MP to seek his views on their controversial proposal to close the Barlick Office. The MP said: "I was absolutely outraged and I told the Minister, Keith Bradley, that the office had to stay in town."

The MP continued: "Under the Conservatives Barnoldswick and other towns lost many essential services. I was determined to do all I could to reverse this trend which was sapping the strength of our small towns. The decision to keep the Caller Office in Barnoldswick open is great news."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 248/99 4 November 1999

MP TO MEET TOWN HALL CHIEFS OVER HOUSING BENEFIT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet the leaders of all the political parties on Pendle Council tomorrow (Friday) in a bid to resolve long-standing problems that have bedevilled the payment of Housing Benefit to claimants.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “There are serious problems at Pendle Council in processing claims for Housing Benefit. These can take months and I have constituents facing eviction because their rent has remained unpaid for an eternity.”

The MP added: “I want to find out what the root of the problem is and what is being done to get things back on an even keel. The Government is currently reviewing Housing Benefit which costs the country over £11 billion pounds a year.”

“We want to get any reform of Housing Benefit absolutely right - first time. We are talking about a key benefit that keeps the roof over someone’s head.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 249/99 Thursday 4 November 1999

PRENTICE VOTES AGAINST INCAPACITY CUTS

Moves by the Government to cut incapacity benefit to disabled people by means testing those with an occupational pension of over £85 per week were thrown into disarray last night after a big rebellion by Labour MPs, including Pendle’s Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster after the vote, the MP said: “The Government has, unfortunately, got it wrong on this one. It takes the shine of what is otherwise a very good Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill. I hope the Government will think again between now and Tuesday when the Bill will return to the Commons.”

The MP added: “We want people to save for their retirement. But if some personal tragedy happens and people have to retire earl;y because they are unfit for work and have to draw down their pension early, we should not then cut the contributory benefit to which they are entitled.”

"If the Government doesn't move on this, we shall be effectively taxing a disabled person, unable to work, at a far higher rate than a millionaire when their income reaches £7,943. All benefit would be lost by the time their pension reaches £11,362."

The MP concluded: "The cuts in disability benefits for future claimants will take a contributory benefit away from people who have saved, saying they are too well off to need them. The same logic could be applied to the state retirement pension - although the Prime Minister has made it absolutely clear their is to intention whatsoever of going down that road. "

Note to Editors: Around 390,000 recipients of IB have a pension income of over £50 per week. Only 2.3% of IB claimants have an occupational pension of over £200 per week (£10,400 a year).
Contact on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give call sign GORDON 1

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 250/99 Thursday 4 November 1999

MP WANTS STATEMENT ON EURO CASH "COCK-UP"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for an urgent Commons statement from Trade and Industry Secretary, Steve Byers, on the implications of an alleged "cock up" which excluded two disadvantaged wards in his Pendle constituency from the proposed new European Objective 2 Structural Funds map. Getting on to the map is the passport to significant sums of European cash.

The MP told the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, that the map from the North West had been drawn up by the North West Development Agency and Regional Assembly who had overlooked two deprived wards in Pendle - Bradley and Whitefield. The map, with this error, was then submitted to the UK Government who, in turn, passed it to the European Commission last month.

The MP said: "My own council was not consulted - as it should have been - before the map was submitted. The RDA's oversight has now been corrected but the proposals map has already gone off to the European Commission. We have to make sure the European Commission is aware of the background to this before they come to make their decision on the UK and European Union wide structural fund areas later this month."

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "I need to be assured that Pendle's case for Objective 2 status has registered with the Minister and the European Commission and Pendle will not be put at a disadvantage because of someone else's mistake." Margaret Beckett said she would pass the MP's concerns on to the Minister.

Contact: Call pager 0181 3456789 and give call sign GORDON 1

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 251/99 Thursday 4 November 1999

JOBS AND CASH BOOST FOR PENDLE's OVER 50s

Pendle's over 50s could be eligible for help to find jobs and a new cash boost under plans announced by local MP, Gordon Prentice, today.

The New Deal 50 Plus and Employment Credit will mean new opportunities for over 50s who want to take up jobs or re-enter the workforce.

There will be a minimum income of £170 a week for those who take up full-time work and £110 a week for part-time workers in the first year of re-employment.

As part of the programme, there will also be a £750 Training Grant to help those who get jobs learn new skills and update the skills they already have.

The MP said: "In the North West, 215,000 people are eligible for the New Deal 50 Plus and over 1.2 million people across the country could qualify for the scheme."

"I know that there are many people in Pendle who want to work but feel that work does not pay enough to make it worthwhile. New Deal 50 Plus will change all that, creating new opportunities for people who want jobs and guaranteeing a minimum income of £170 a week for full time work.

"Recipients will also receive high quality job search advice from their own Personal Adviser. This is an extension of the government's successful New Deal programme and
will be introduced nationwide from April 2000. It will be introduced in nine pilot areas across the country from today.

more follows

JOBS AND CASH BOOST FOR OVER 50s IN PENDLE

The MP continued: "For over 50s losing a job can be devastating. I want those people in Pendle to know that they can get help with learning new skills, finding a job, and knowing that the job will pay more than benefits."

Note to Editors: The New Deal 50 Plus is a major new package of assistance for over 50s who are looking for work. It is designed to stop people moving into long-term unemployment and provide a route back to work.

Between 1979 and 1998 the percentage of men aged 50-64 in employment fell from 84% to 68%. The Chancellor announced New Deal 50 plus in his March 1999 Budget. It is a voluntary scheme which comprises four main parts:

* **Employment Credit**
  £60 a week for full-time work or £40 a week for those in part-time work for the first year of re-employment.

* **Help with Training Costs**
  An in work grant of £750 to help people keep the jobs they get under the New Deal and to update their skills.

* **Personal Advice**
  High quality advice from a personal adviser for those looking for work or people seeking to re-enter the workforce.

* **Jobsearch Help**
  Access to help when looking for work and preparing for the labour market

More than 1.2 million people are eligible for New Deal 50 Plus.
The government has allocated £270 million over three years to the programme to provide new opportunities for people over 50. It will also provide a potential source of experienced workers for employers.

To be eligible for the New Deal 50 Plus you must be:

- aged 50 or over (no upper age limit)
- unemployed/economically inactive and claiming benefits for at least six months (see qualifying benefits listed over).

For access to the Employment Credit and Training Grant:

- your job must be at least 16 hours per week
- have an expected total income of less than £15,000 a year. (There is no capital limit.)

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

For Immediate Release. No 252/99 Monday 8 November 1999

£100 WINTER WARMER FOR PENSIONERS

Over seven and a half million pensioner households in Britain will benefit from the £100 winter fuel payments. These payments have increased fivefold since they were introduced for the first winter of the new Labour government in 1997. The first winter fuel payments are being sent to 1.5 million pensioners this week.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Over seven and a half million pensioner households in the country will be getting an extra £100 this winter to help with heating costs - tax-free. Winter fuel payments are being sent out this week to 1.5 million pensioners on Income Support. A further 8.6 million pensioners will receive their payments by the middle of December."

The MP added: "For the first time, the winter fuel payments will be made before Christmas so that all pensioners will receive help for their heating when they need it."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the following pager number 819338 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 254/99 Wed 10 November 1999

RIGHT TO ROAM DESTINED TO BECOME LAW says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be giving a keynote speech on access to the countryside and public rights of way at a seminar this Saturday (13 November) at County Hall, Preston, organised by Lancashire County Council's Countryside Service.

The full day seminar - which will involve a wide range of countryside interests including the National Farmers Union and the newly established Countryside Agency - comes just days before the formal announcement of countryside access legislation - expected in the Queen's Speech, one week today (17 November).

The Pendle MP is a well known campaigner for greater rights of access to the countryside. His Private Member's Bill on the Right to Roam triggered a national debate on the subject. He withdrew his Bill in March after the Government indicated

it would introduce its own legislation to give new rights of access to over four million acres of open countryside which are currently out of bounds.

Last Sunday (7 November) the MP joined ramblers from the ABC campaign (Access to Boulsworth) in a walk over forbidden moorland in his constituency.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: “The Bill which will be introduced in this coming session of Parliament will be historic. It will give people the right to walk across open uncultivated country. Boulsworth Hill and thousands of acres of outstandingly beautiful countryside on our own doorstep in Pendle will be available for us all to enjoy.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 255/99 Tuesday 9 November 1999

MP PLUGS JSA LOOP-HOLE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement from Social Security Minister, Angela Eagle, that changes are to be made to ensure that Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support will not be refused because of earnings owed to people when their employer shuts up shop and their jobs disappear.

The MP said: “This problem hit the headlines locally last year following the closure of Lontex Industries in Barnoldswick when the company went into receivership. Ex-employees found they were entitled to claim JSA because of a ‘notional allowance’ being taken into account. This meant that because they were to receive redundancy pay from the Redundancy Board, no benefits could be paid in the meantime. This meant they would receive no monies whatsoever until the redundancy payment was sorted out - this could take eight to twelve weeks. This was completely unacceptable.”

The MP continued: “The situation was made worse by a knock-on effect. If a person is not entitled to JSA, it can effect eligibility to claim on insurance cover on loans, council tax benefit, housing benefit and so forth. The same situation has arisen on a number of occasions since then, including people made redundant from Bouyant and I have been pressing Ministers to close this loophole in the benefit rules.”

The MP said: “The Minister has now told me that this anomaly is to be rectified. And about time too! This is great news and will help those people who, through no fault of

their own, are unable to obtain the money owing to them by their employers when their jobs disappear."

more follows.....

MP PLUGS JSA LOOP-HOLE

The MP concluded: "The circumstances which give rise to this problem fortunately don't happen everyday. But when they do, people have the right to expect speedy help from the State."

Note to Editor: The announcement was made to the House of Commons by Social Security Minister, Angela Eagle, on 25 October. She advised that it is intended to bring forward regulations at the earliest opportunity to ensure that JSA/IS is not refused because of earnings owed to people when their job ends.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign Gordon 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 256/99 Tuesday 9 November 1999

MP CUTS THE RIBBON

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT SALTERFORTH CP SCHOOL, SALTERFORTH AT 10.45am ON SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will perform the opening ceremony for the mezzanine floor at Salterforth CP School this Saturday. The MP visited the school last January to lend his support to the School's successful campaign to get two new classrooms they so desperately needed.

The MP said: "I was delighted when I heard the news that the school was going to get the extra space they wanted. They were, quite literally, bulging at the seams. This marvellous outcome was due in no small part to the efforts of the PTA in raising

£17,000. Lancashire County Council matched this amount and the project got the go ahead this summer."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign Gordon 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 257/99 Tuesday 9 November 1999

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT PENDLE LABOUR PARTY AUTUMN FAIR, LESSER CIVIC HALL, STANLEY STREET, NELSON AT 10.00am ON SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be supporting his constituency Labour Party at its annual Autumn Fair this Saturday as they raise much needed funds.

The MP said: 'This is one of the biggest events in the local Labour Party's calendar and helps raise the cash we need to fight elections. So we want lots of people coming along to support us. I for one shall be browsing the stalls to pick up a few bargains!"

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign Gordon 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 258/99 Tuesday 9 November 1999

OPEN DOOR FOR MP

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE MP AT THE OPEN DOOR PROJECT, 1 GREAT GEORGE STREET, COLNE AT 3.00pm FRIDAY 12 NOVEMBER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting the 'Open Door' Community Development Project in Colne this Friday. The scheme is run by Colne Churches Together and is principally a drop in and welfare centre for the residents of Colne. Working alongside the Project at the centre are other organisations including the Princes Trust, youth and community information point for young people, Lighthouse Pregnancy Crisis Project, credit union collection point, Marriage Care, general counselling and a youth club.

The MP said: "As well as having a drop in cafe, the Project provides food, clothing and furniture for people in need. I am looking forward to meeting the staff at the centre and seeing for myself the work they do."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign Gordon 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 259/99 Tuesday 9 November 1999

FREE TV LICENCES FOR OLDER PENSIONERS

Free TV licences will be available to pensioners aged 75 and over from next Autumn.

The announcement in the Commons today by Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, will benefit over 3 million households. Almost 50% of such households, set to benefit, are the poorest in the country.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “This is splendid news. I hope this concession can be progressively extended to all pensioners.”

“I know that many older pensioners here in Pendle will be absolutely delighted.”

Notes to Editors: The measure will cost the Government around £300m in a full year. A Colour TV licence costs £101 and a black and white licence £33.50. Existing concessionary schemes - such as the reduction in the licence fee for blind people and for people in residential and sheltered accommodation - will remain in force for people not affected by the new change. Anyone currently qualifying for these concessions who also meets the age criterion will now qualify for the free TV licence.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 260/99 Wed 10 November 1999

“OFF MESSAGE” MP ELECTED TO LABOUR’S NATIONAL POLICY FORUM

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, was today elected to Labour’s National Policy Forum in a ballot of the Party’s MPs.

The Policy Forum has a block of nine places reserved for MPs representing the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Speaking after the result of the ballot was announced, the MP said: “I am delighted to have a role in helping to formulate Labour’s policy.”

He added: “It is no secret that some people believe that New Labour is in the grip of control freaks who choreograph everything down to the last detail and that policy is made by the few for the many.”

“Policy making should be clear and transparent using democratic structures that are understood and accepted. And we need to listen to the minority viewpoint. What is “off message” today is very often tomorrow’s conventional wisdom.”

Note to Editors: Last month, Azhar Ali, the Leader of Pendle Council’s Labour Group was elected to the Policy Forum as one of the representatives of the Party’s North West Region.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 260/99 Wednesday 17 November 1999

ANOTHER FALL IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,358 (1,525 in September) - an unemployment rate of 3.9%. There were 1,004 men and 354 women out of work. The corresponding figures in September were respectively 1,135 and 390.

Nationally, unemployment has fallen again since September and the numbers in work has hit a new high. The Office for National Statistics confirmed the number of benefits claimants had fallen by 8,400 in October compared with September. The number of people in work stands at a record 27,500,000.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: "The figures for Pendle are encouraging. More and more people are entering the active labour force and the economy has generated a very high level of vacancies. This is good news for Pendle."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 261/99 Thursday 11 November 1999

MP SAYS BUDGET STRATEGY IS GOOD FOR PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says the Chancellor's budget strategy will be good for Pendle and East Lancashire. In his pre-budget report this week, the Chancellor outlined the action he is
taking to secure a platform of stability and steady growth so that through measures for work, enterprise and fairness, rising living standards can be delivered for all.

Speaking from Westminster with his reaction to the pre budget statement, Gordon Prentice said: "Let's face it, a job is the best kind of social security. That is why I back the Government's drive to get everyone who can work into work."

"On the specific measures, I know that the decision on fuel prices will be welcomed. In future, the level of fuel duties will be decided budget by budget instead of the 6 per cent fuel duty escalator. Any increases above inflation will be ring fenced and the money will go into modernising transport."

Note to Editors: The Pre Budget report contained the following measures:
Increasing employment opportunity for all:

* An extension of the New Deal for the over-25s.
* An enhanced New Deal for Lone Parents, plus an extra £12 million for childcare in further education, providing an extra 10,000 places.
* New measures to link the workers without jobs to the jobs without workers.

Ensuring fairness for families and communities:

* New Children's Fund to tackle child poverty.
* Free TV licenses for pensioners over 75.
* Extension of the 10p rate of tax to savings from April 1999.
* A permanent £100 annual Winter Fuel Allowance for every pensioner household.
* Extra potential investment for schools, hospitals and transport.

more follows

MP SAYS BUDGET STRATEGY IS GOOD FOR PENDLE

* An extra £150 million for the modernisation of school buildings.

Meeting the Productivity Challenge:

* New employee share ownership schemes to give workers a stake in firms.
* Capital Gains Tax cuts and a new tax credit for research and development to boost enterprise and create jobs.
* Locally-based venture capital funds in every region to promote balanced economic growth across the UK.
* Up front tax relief of 20 per cent for large firms that invest in growing companies.

Protecting the environment:

* Further details on the Climate Change Levy to cut pollution by at least 2 million tonnes of carbon a year. All revenues will be recycled to business.
* Level of fuel duties decided budget by budget instead of 6 per cent fuel duty escalator. Any increases above inflation ring fenced into modernising transport.

Delivering economic stability

* Growth this year is forecast to be 1.75 per cent and even stronger next year.
* Public finances now under control with borrowing cut by £30 billion since the election.
* Interest rates peaked at 7.5 per cent, half the 15 per cent peak of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Inflation is close to target and is expected to remain there.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 262/99 Thursday 18 November 1999

DRIVE TO MODERNISE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Government is developing a new model of mental health care to deliver a fast, efficient and effective service suited to the needs of the people and patients using it says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was speaking following the publication this week of new plans to modernise the treatment and care of people with mental health problems by Health Secretary Alan Milburn. The measures include a Green Paper on the Reform of the Mental Health Act 1983 which will introduce compulsory care and treatment orders applying in both hospitals and the community. There will be an additional £40 million to modernise mental health care and £13 million in Mental Health Grant to local authorities. There will also be 470 additional secure places and over 100 outreach teams to provide care for 9,000 patients by April 2001 and 24-hour access to specialist services for the most severely ill.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: “These measures are about putting public confidence back into the mental health system and ensuring the safety of both the public and patients.”

He added: “Under the previous Government, care in the community too often became care less in the community. We are determined to see safe, sound, supportive services both in hospitals and the wider community.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 263/99 Wednesday 17 November 1999

MP BACKS SURE START

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be urging Pendle Council and other agencies to participate in the government's Sure Start programme to help young children.

The MP said: "Families with young children need support from time to time. Many can depend on relatives, neighbours, friends, their communities, public services and voluntary organisations. But for some people this network of support is too patchy and unco-ordinated to meet their needs. The government is committed to helping these families who are looking for advice and support."

The Sure Start programme is central to the governments drive to eliminate child poverty and tackle social exclusion. The aim is to provide the support to parents through help in nurturing and developing health, well-being and learning capability of youngsters from the very moment they are born.

Note to Editor: Sure Start is a cross-governmental programme, announced in July 1998. The Government is making available £452 Million in England between 1999-2000 and 2001-02 to establish at least 250 programmes across the country.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 264/99 Wed 17 November 1999

ENTERPRISE AND FAIRNESS AT THE HEART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME FOR THE COMING YEAR

Speaking today after the Queen's Speech to Parliament, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said:

“Our new legislative programme is based on enterprise and fairness, and creating a modern Britain. It will build on the economic achievements of the last year. There is a record number of people in work. The claimant count for unemployment at its lowest level for 19 years. And we have introduced the national minimum wage which has benefited so many people here in Pendle.”

“I want to see Britain transform itself into a dynamic, knowledge-based economy but, at the same time, supporting and encouraging our manufacturing base. New legislation will make the UK the best environment world-wide in which businesses can trade electronically.”

“On the social policy front, we shall be improving the support to young people leaving local authority care and we shall be putting in place measures to improve standards and stamp out abuse in social services. We shall also be strengthening the education of children with Special Educational Needs.

The MP added: “This is going to be a very busy session with no fewer than 26 Bills - some of the very major indeed. But, despite the odd mishap, we are on track. The Government has created a climate of economic stability. Inflation is on target, Government borrowing has been cut by £20 billion and long term interest rates and mortgage rates are at all time lows.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 265/99 Wed 17 November 1999

MP DELIGHTED AS RIGHT TO ROAM GETS GO AHEAD

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, was celebrating today as the Government confirmed it would bring in legislation to guarantee a right to roam over four million acres of open, uncultivated countryside in England and Wales.

The MP - a long standing champion of greater access to the countryside - withdrew his Private Member's Bill in March this year after the Government promised it would bring in its own legislation.

Speaking from Westminster after the Queen's Speech, the MP said: "I feel pretty good about things. The Right to Roam - exercised responsibly and with proper safeguards - will give millions of people the opportunity to experience the beautiful countryside we have in Britain but which, sadly, has been out of bounds for far too long."

'This is an historic day."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 267/99 Wed 24 November 1999

PENDLE MP SLAMS REDWOOD ATTACK ON ROAD SAFETY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has slammed Conservative Shadow Environment Secretary, John Redwood, who has called for the removal of many safety features from our roads.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government has already given local authorities the powers to introduce 20 mph 'home zones' in residential areas, which have been shown to
reduce all casualties by an average of 60 per cent. However, the Conservative vigorously oppose our plans, and John Redwood has called for extreme policies such as the end of "the growing selection of humps, cameras, traffic lights and coloured lines that now deck out many a main route"."

The MP continued: "Even though 1998 saw the lowest number of road fatalities since records began in 1926, we want to do better. We have increased spending on road safety and we will publish a new road safety strategy in the New Year."

Last Sunday, the MP joined a remembrance service at St Philip's Church in Nelson for the victims of road traffic accidents.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 268/99 Wed 24 November 1999

QUESTIONS ON THE EURO

Pendle supporters of the "Democracy Movement" have quizzed local MP, Gordon Prentice, on his views on the Euro. These are set out below. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government's position is straightforward and I support it."

Q1 **Will you oppose scrapping the Pound and replacing it with the new Euro, as long as you are my MP?** As the Chancellor set out in his statement to Parliament in October 1997, in principle, British membership of a successful single currency would be beneficial to Britain and to Europe. The key factor is whether the economic benefits of joining are clear and unambiguous. Making a decision to join in this Parliament is not realistic. To give ourselves a genuine choice in the future, it is essential that Government and business prepare intensively during this Parliament so that Britain will be in a position to join a single currency, should we wish to, early in the next parliament. A decision on British membership of EMU, if recommended by the Government, will be made by a referendum of the British people. Unlike today's Conservative Party, who have put Party interests before the national interest. For the Labour Party the national economic interest must be the deciding factor and the Government's five economic tests are the right means of making this assessment.

Q2 **Will you fight attempts by Brussels to increase any UK taxes towards European levels?** Tax harmonisation is not the way forward for Europe. The priority for Europe is the promotion of employment reforms and competitive markets to achieve higher levels of employment and prosperity. The UK will not agree to any action at the European level which would raise business costs and harm investment and jobs in Britain. All EU tax decisions are subject to unanimity. The UK will not hesitate to oppose tax proposals which are not in Britain's interest and we are committed to retaining that right of veto.

Q3 **Do you believe Brussels should be able to overrule laws made by the British Parliament?** In those member states where the two systems of law are divergent or conflict, European Community law takes precedence over national law, and has done so in the case of Britain since we joined the EC in 1973, under a Conservative Government. To repeal the European Communities Act 1972 would be incompatible with Britain's membership of the European Community, and, unlike today's Conservative Party, I do not favour withdrawal from Europe. **Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1**

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 269/99 Wed 24 November 1999

HOLIDAY BOOST FOR WORKING PEOPLE

An extra 600,000 workers got a boost this when paid annual leave rose from three to four weeks, taking the total number benefiting to more than three million.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “This welcome change is part of the Working Time Regulations. In this day and age those in employment should expect this minimum level of annual leave. We are no longer living in Victorian England! It is also proof positive of the Government's commitment to family-friendly employment.”

In spring 1998 more than 5 million people - around a fifth of those in work in the UK - usually worked more than 48 hours a week in their main job. The Working Time Regulations came into force on 1 October 1998. The regulations require employers to “take all reasonable steps” to ensure that employees do not work, *against their will,* more than an average of 48 hours a week. It is usually averaged over a period of 17 weeks.

The regulation does not apply to everyone in employment; the genuine self employed are excluded. A number of sectors were excluded because of the differing needs of the work performed.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 270/99 Thursday 25 November 1999

TAX BURDEN IS BEING LIFTED FOR LOW AND MIDDLE INCOME FAMILIES SAYS PENDLE MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has ridiculed the claim by Conservative leader, William Hague, that the tax burden has increased under Labour.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “This Government has sought to lift the burden on low and middle income families by introducing a whole raft of new measures designed to put money in people’s pockets. A new l0p rate of tax has been introduced.
The basic rate is being cut to 22p, the Working Families Tax Credit is now in place, and business tax rates are being cut to their lowest ever levels.”

“The average household will be £380 a year better off as a result of this year's Budget. And as a result of the measures in the last two Budgets the tax burden on a typical family will fall to its lowest level since 1972.”

“Official figures for the tax burden were published in the Pre-Budget Report (page 155). They show that the tax burden is lower this year than last year, and in the two following years will also be lower than last year. The tax burden falls from 37.5% in 1998-99, to 37.0% in 1999-00, and to 36.8% in 2000-01.”

The MP added: “The Opposition has a brass neck to even broach this subject. At the 1992 election they promised to cut taxes year-on-year. Twenty-two tax rises followed. They promised not to put VAT on fuel, and did so. Who can trust what they say on tax?”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 271/99 Thursday 25 November 1999

LANCASHIRE POLICE GET BIG BOOST IN FUNDING

Police forces in England and Wales are set to receive funding worth £7.4 billion to pay for policing in the first year of the new
Millennium - a 3% increase on the allocation for 1999/00. But in Lancashire, the police are set to receive an increase of £7m over last year - and increase of 3.9%. The Lancashire Police Authority will be getting £185.3m to fight crime.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "It is important our police are well resourced. I am obviously pleased that we in Lancashire are getting are getting the extra cash we need."

Note to editors: In a letter to the Pendle MP today, Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke, wrote:

The Home Secretary has today announced the details of the provisional funding settlement for police authorities in 2000/01. As part of the settlement we are proposing to increase the funding available to the Lancashire Police Authority next year, This latter sets out the details of the overall funding position in 2000/01 and our proposals for the Lancashire Police Authority.

Last year the Home Secretary announced there would be an extra £1.24 billion for the police service in England and Wales over the three-year period 1 999/2000 to 2001/02. In the second year (2000/01) of the programme the amount of police authority spending to which the Government is prepared to contribute its share of funding will increase by 3%. That amount is known as Total Standard Spending. Our proposed funding settlement emphasises the commitment of this Government to help the police to play their part in tackling crime and disorder.

Under the Home Secretary's proposals announced today and other police funding proposals within the local government finance system also announced today by Hilary Armstrong, the Lancashire Police Authority will receive an increase in funding of 3.9 per cent over this year.

The settlement for 2000/01 also takes into account the commitment of the

more follows

LANCASHIRE POLICE GET BIG BOOST IN FUNDING

Home Secretary to improve efficiency in the police service during the lifetime of this Parliament. Last year we set a year on year target of 2% for efficiency improvements for the police service. By achieving these targets, the police authority can reinvest the savings to help meet front-line policing priorities. The efficiency planning process is an important step towards the Best Value regime, which is introduced from

April 2000. The police will be required to demonstrate that they are delivering an effective, efficient and high quality service.

The Government abolished crude and universal capping of local authority budgets last year. Nevertheless, the Home Secretary expects police authorities to set budgets that are responsible, prudent and reasonable. When considering whether to call-in the budgets of police authorities in England for next year, John Prescott will look together at the budget set for 1999/2000 and 2000/01.

The Home Secretary announced in September a number of new initiatives to help the police tackle crime. There will be a new Crime Fighting Fund to help drive forward the Government's crusade against crime. The fund will give the police the money they need to recruit, over the next three years, 5,000 more police officers, over and above the numbers forces would otherwise have recruited. In the first year (2000101) £35 million will be made available to begin the programme. Further funding will be made available in the following two years. The money will be ring-fenced for front-line policing.

This new Crime Fighting Fund will be 'ring-fenced' as a challenge fund and police authorities will be able to bid for a share of the additional funding. Bidding guidance will go out shortly. Every police authority will be eligible for a share of the new funding.

In addition, an extra £50 million is to be made available to help fund a modern national police radio system. The Government is also committing an initial investment of £34 million over the next two years to expand the national DNA database. DNA analysis enables the police to match offences to scene of crime through microscopic samples,

This Government has already shown its commitment to reducing crime and disorder. We have committed an extra £1.24 billion of funding for the police service over three years. There will a further £400m available through the crime reduction programme. This includes £150m for CCTV schemes, £11m to fund security measures to help reduce crime and fear of crime amongst low income pensioners who are most at risk from burglary, £30m for targeted policing projects and £50m for the Reducing Burglary Initiative which will be aimed at 2 million homes in 500 neighbourhoods with high burglary rates..."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 272/99 Tuesday 30 November 1999

MP WELCOMES LIFTING OF BEEF ON THE BONE BAN

News that the Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, is to make a statement to the Commons this afternoon, lifting the ban on beef on the bone has been welcomed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Number 10 confirmed today that the Chief Medical Officers of England, Scotland and Wales had recommended a lifting of the ban on beef on the bone.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “This is splendid news. The Chief Medical Officers have now given beef on the bone a clean bill of health. I hope it will soon be back on our dinner tables.”

The MP added: "We mustn’t forget how we got into this situation in the first place. BSE was a poisonous inheritance for us but we have tackled it with determination. The abattoirs are closely monitored and all the controls are in place.”

“Some people criticised us for the ban on beef on the bone. But our first duty is to protect public health by ensuring that the food we eat is safe and wholesome."

“Our new Food Standards Agency will be up and running in the Spring.”

Note to Editors: The inquiry set up by the present Government into the origins of BSE and its consequences is continuing.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 273/99 Tuesday 30 November 1999

MP HAILS NORTHERN IRELAND BREAKTHROUGH

The setting up of the new Northern Ireland Executive has been hailed as an "incredible triumph for common sense" by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking at Westminster today in advance of tonight's debate on the Northern Ireland Order which transfers power from the Westminster Parliament to Belfast, the MP said: "This is an historic day. For the first time in a quarter of a century, the people of Northern Ireland, through their own elected representatives, will be able to decide their own affairs and their own future."

"We all hope the new settlement with this unique power sharing executive takes root and flourishes. Life has been a vale of tears for too many people in Northern Ireland for far too long."

"It's time for the politicians to bury their differences and work for peace and harmony."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 274/99 Wednesday 1 December 1999

HOUSING MINISTER TO VISIT PENDLE

Housing Minister, Nick Raynesford, is to visit Pendle early next year in response to a joint invitation from local MP, Gordon Prentice, and Pendle Council.

The Council's Chief Executive, Stephen Barnes, told the Minister the Council wanted to declare a second renewal area known as Nelson West. The first is in the Southfield area of Nelson.

Speaking from Westminster, Gordon Prentice said: "I am delighted the Minister is coming to Pendle to see things for himself. I have known Nick for many years and he understands the unique pressures facing us in the area. "

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP wrote to the Minister as follows: "You will have received a letter dated 20 October from the Chief Executive of my local authority (copy enclosed) inviting you to Pendle to see the housing conditions in Nelson where the council hopes to establish a new neighbourhood renewal area. I very much hope, you will be able to find time in your diary to make such a visit.

I know you are totally familiar with the housing situation here in the, North West, but I just want to underline the unique nature, of the problems we have in East Lancashire. Here in Pendle, I believe we have more pre 1919 properties than anywhere else in the country and much of the stock is in a woeful condition. We have additional problems relating to empty housing and properties that can barely be given away.

Hilary Armstrong did come here a couple of years ago and I think she found it very useful."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 275/99 Wednesday 1 December 1999

CATCHING THE NHS CHEATS

The Government is committed to combating fraud against the public purse wherever it occurs says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was speaking at Westminster following the publication today of an Audit Commission report which shows that detected fraud in the NHS has risen.

The MP said: "It does not mean that more people are committing fraud, but that we are better at catching them at it."

Today the NHS's five main professional associations, including the British Medical Association and the British Dental Association, are to sign a charter which commits them to working with the government on practical action to counter fraud and corruption within the NHS.

The MP added: “By working in partnership with the professional organisations and others we can ensure there is no hiding place for those who seek to cheat the NHS.”

“Every pound lost to fraud in the NHS is a pound not spent on services for patients.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 276/99 Thursday 3 December 1999

MP CALLS FOR EARLY ACTION ON LONG TERM CARE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for early decisions on the future of long term care for the elderly. The MP was speaking at Westminster in advance of today’s Commons debate on the issue.

The MP said: “The previous Government left long term care in a long term mess. The system encouraged local authorities to place people in independent sector residential care rather than supporting them to live independently in their own homes. And even worse, people were pressurised to sell their homes immediately on entering care, rather than encouraging a period of rehabilitation to enable them to return home.”

The Government set up a Royal Commission to look into a better way of doing things but it reported in March. We’ve really got to get moving on this. The means test for residential care hits hardest those who have only modest amounts of capital, usually their family home, and lower retirement incomes. It leads to a widespread fear that people will be forced to sell their homes in order to fund their long term care requirements. That’s not on.”

Note to Editors: The Government is already making major strides to ensure better care and higher standards for people in need of long term care and their carers. The Government is: • improving services to carers by allocating £140m over 3 years to help fund respite care; • extending direct payments to people aged 65 and over; • has specific proposals to improve the quality of residential and nursing care services by introducing a new independent regulatory system and the development of a set

of national standards. The Government is investing an extra £3b in Social Services over this and the next two years.

The Government is to publish a Long-term Care Charter, which provides for the first time a national framework for improving housing, health and social services for all adults who need long-term care or support by: • helping users and carers to find out about services; • understanding and responding to the needs of users and carers; • finding a suitable place to

more follows

live; • helping people to stay independent; • getting the right health care.

The Royal Commission on Long Term Care was announced on 4 December 1997. This fulfilled the Government's manifesto commitment. We will, in due course, make a full response to the majority and minority reports of the Royal Commission, setting out the Government's approach to better care and higher standards.

It is right that the Government gives full and proper consideration to the majority and minority reports of the Royal Commission. Major changes to the funding system for care have substantial cost implications, both now and in the future. Free personal care is estimated to cost around £1 billion a year today and more than £6 billion a year extra by 2051.

The Government will consider long term care funding alongside changes to improve the quality and delivery of care. And we shall base any future reforms in this area on the basis of our key principles - independence and choice, fairness and quality.

The Government believes that, whatever their care needs, people should be enabled to live in their own home for as long as practicable. Independence and choice over how and where care needs are met are key elements in the way long term care is delivered.

There will of course be situations where a person needs to be admitted to a residential care or nursing home. Reforms to the system of long term care must reflect and reinforce the government's policy objective of encouraging independence through greater choice.

The Government is already providing local authorities with special grants totalling £293 million this year to encourage them to help older people return to independent living and prevent their admission to institutional care.

Higher Quality Raising the quality of care is central to the Government's approach to modernising long term care. The Government's approach includes: •developing new national minimum standards for residential and nursing homes; in due course will be setting standards for all other social care services; • developing the first ever quality strategy for social care; • working to improve the training and qualifications of the social care workforce.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 277/99 Thursday 2 December 1999

LET'S GET MOVING ON TRANSPORT says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the publication of the Transport Bill. The MP said: "The Bill contains measures to promote the use of railways through the Strategic Rail Authority, improve bus services, and reduce road congestion and pollution. More controversially, It provides for a Public Private Partnership for National Air Traffic Services. Clearly, there will be a great deal of discussion about that proposal."

We inherited high and growing levels of road traffic congestion, poor public transport, inadequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists, and significant under-investment in road maintenance. Last year's Transport White Paper was the first comprehensive statement of transport policy for nearly 20 years. And we published this within 18 months of being elected. We cannot solve the shortcomings of the last 20 years overnight. But we have already made significant headway by increasing investment, particularly in public transport and road maintenance, and the measures contained in the Bill will pave the way for the modern, effective transport system this country needs and deserves.

Note to EDitors: Railways: • The Transport Bill will establish the Strategic Rail Authority - which has been operating in shadow form since 1 April this year - and make railway regulation more effective and accountable. • The SRA's mission will be to promote the use of the railways for passengers and freight, to secure the strategic development of the railway network, and to contribute to an integrated transport system. • The Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee said earlier that the Railways Bill, now subsumed in the Transport Bill, "is a practical way of addressing the problems of a restructured railway".

Buses: • Buses are crucial to the success of our integrated transport policy and can provide a real alternative to car use. • The Bill will give local authorities the power to improve local bus services through Quality Partnerships and Quality Contracts, and will include provisions to improve passenger information and promote service stability. • The Government will also make good its promise to give all elderly people the right to half price bus fares on the basis of a bus pass costing no more than £5 a year.

Road Charging: • Local authorities will be given new powers to introduce charges on congested roads and to introduce workplace parking charges where there is local support. • The money raised will be put back into improving local transport, improving choice and tackling congestion.

Q. What about transport safety?
A. The Paddington crash reminds us all of the need to put safety first.

With Labour safety will always be paramount. Immediate action is being taken on the railways to improve driver training, the safety culture, and safety management. The Bill provides for a Public Private Partnership for National Air Traffic Services which will completely separate safety regulation (which will remain in the public sector) from service provision and bring in the necessary investment and management skills needed for an air traffic control system for the next century. We will shortly be publishing our road safety strategy which will show how we can deliver a safer road transport system by 2010.

Q. Labour is anti-car and creating a standstill Britain?
A. The Government is not anti-car, but anti-congestion and anti-pollution. We are making car ownership more affordable while tackling the problems arising from car use. Before local charging is introduced there should be more local choice provided by improved public transport, appropriate technology should be installed and public support won over the next 4 or 5 years.

We have set up a Motorists' Forum under the Chairmanship of Sir Trevor Chinn to reflect the views of motoring organisations and other stakeholders. It will involve the main motoring organisations and other stakeholders and will be working under the aegis of The Commission for Integrated Transport. This week the Deputy Prime Minister met motoring organisations to underline the Government's approach to the car.

We will be spending an extra £1 billion over the next 3 years to increase capacity through better traffic flow, compared with 1998-9. We are also building 19 new bypasses, as well as 18 other major schemes at a cost of £1.4 billion. Over three years, we will increase spending on all road maintenance by 20%, compared with the Tory record in Government.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 278/99 Wednesday 8 December 1999

MP CALLS FOR MORE HELP FOR CREDIT UNIONS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging the Government to do more to encourage the development of credit unions. His Pendle constituency boasts two credit unions. The MP is a long standing member of the one in Nelson and is currently in the process of joining the other in Colne which has recently been set up.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Credit unions are commonplace elsewhere in Europe and for good reasons. They provide loans on very advantageous terms. The local community benefits rather than some remote financial institution.”

Yesterday, Treasury Minister, Melanie Johnson, told the MP: “Two reports were published on 16 November which include moves to boost credit unions. The report by the Credit Unions Taskforce investigated ways in which banks and building societies could help credit unions and the report by the Policy Action Team looked at ways to improve individual access to financial services.”

“There will be a new central services organisation for credit unions to help them to deliver a more consistent and flexible service to members. Improved regulation by the Financial Services Authority will ensure that credit union members enjoy similar protection to savers in banks and building societies. A number of deregulatory measures including increasing the maximum repayment periods for loans, removing the maximum membership limit and allowing credit unions to charge for ancillary services will also be implemented.”

Note to Editors: The Taskforce and Policy Action Team are Government working groups set up as part of the drive to tackle social exclusion.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 279/99 Wednesday 8 December 1999

BUILDING SOCIETIES LESS LIKELY TO CLOSE BRANCHES THAN BANKS SAYS MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed new research commissioned by the Building Societies Association which shows that Building Societies have been more successful than banks and converted building societies in maintaining their branch networks. The MP, who is a member of the Parliamentary all Party Building Societies Group, is a great supporter of mutuals. He says their customers get a better deal.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “In Pendle we have our own splendid building society - the Marsden - and I shall be meeting its Chief Executive shortly to discuss recent developments in the housing and finance sectors. Maintaining the branch network is a key concern for many people and this new research gives the building societies the credit they deserve.”

Note to Editors: The report studied the affluence or poverty of areas where branches were being closed. It was found that building society branch closures were in areas that were less socially deprived than those areas in which the banks or converters were closing branches. The authors (from Newcastle University) suggested that - "There is evidence that building societies are less likely to close branches in socially deprived areas as well as evidence that building societies are opening in the same areas that converters are closing branches. These two trends taken together may suggest that building societies are plugging some of the gaps left by the closures of converters in more deprived communities."

The researchers suggested a number of reasons why building societies were less likely to close branches than banks. Building societies were established with the original intention of providing the opportunity to purchase homes to those whose needs were not being met elsewhere. Their corporate structure gives them the flexibility to provide a service to members rather than to simply maximise profits and the strong local identity of many societies may make them less likely to withdraw from communities that they have historically served.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 280/99 Tuesday 7 December 1999

MP PLEDGES TO FILL THE DENTAL GAPS IN PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is keeping up his campaign to see better dental services for Pendle and has welcomed news that the Department of Health is working on a comprehensive strategy for dentistry in England. The White Paper is expected early in the new year.

The MP said: “Here in Lancashire we have the worst dental health in the country and the provision of dentistry is patchy. The Government is pouring millions of pounds into NHS dentistry but people in Pendle are still having problems finding an NHS dentist. The White Paper should go a long way to address the problem here by creating a framework to make sure that anyone who wants NHS dentistry can get it.”

The MP continued: “I have written to all the dentists in Pendle to tell them of the Government’s commitment that by the end of 2001 access to NHS dentistry will be fair, fast and convenient.”

Note to editor: Since 1997 the government has attacked the problems in the NHS dental service in four ways:
1. by properly identifying and mapping exactly which areas are well provided for and which are not
2. by providing new incentives for dentists to treat more NHS patients. The Investing in Dentistry initiative spent £10 million funding the expansion of NHS dental practices in 340 locations across the country, opening up registration with an NHS dentist to 800,000 more patients

3. by launching the Personal Dental Service programme, which is delivering new ways of getting NHS dental treatment including a pilot scheme of ‘phone and go’ dental access centre where people who cannot register with a dentist but want one can simply ring to make an appointment.
4. by using NHS Direct as a source of reliable and comprehensive information about NHS dental services, including emergency out of hours services, and where to get them.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 282/99 Wednesday 8 December 1999

MP SUPPORTS SLEEP-OUT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing members of the Barley Youth Club who are ‘sleeping out’ over the weekend, Saturday 11 and 12 December. The Youth Club’s aim is to draw attention to the plight of the homeless and also raise funds for a charity.

The MP said: ‘Full marks to the young people of Barley. The homeless are too often forgotten by the rest of us.’

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 281/99 Tuesday 7 December 1999

MP BACKS CAMPAIGN FOR LICENSING SCHEME FOR PRIVATE LANDLORDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is giving his full support to a campaign for the introduction of a National Licensing Scheme for Private Sector Landlords led by Gateshead Metropolitan Council.

The MP said: “I am one hundred percent behind this campaign. In my constituency surgeries I regularly witness the terrible effect anti-social behaviour can have on people and neighbourhoods. We also need to tackle the bad landlord who allows his or her properties to fall into a state of decay while, at the same time, scooping a small fortune in rent which comes from public funds through the housing benefit system. One bad landlord is one too many.”

He continued: “The actions of a small number of landlords and their tenants can cause significant problems for the residents of some neighbourhoods.”

The MP finished by saying: “Current legislation is not always effective in achieving a solution and a formal licensing scheme for private landlords would enable many of these problems to be tackled. I shall be backing the campaign for a change in the law to require private landlords to be licensed.”

more follows....

MP BACKS CAMPAIGN FOR LICENSING SCHEME FOR PRIVATE LANDLORDS

Note to editor: The campaign is to be launched at the House of Commons next Wednesday 15 December. The proposals would include the need for landlords to obtain a licence, and in order to do this the landlord and the property would need to satisfy a number of requirements. These would include the property being adequately maintained with necessary safety certificates. The manager or owner would need to be a fit and proper person with no relevant convictions, a good management record and an approved tenancy agreement, an adequate letting policy (which include the vetting of new tenants) and a rent deposit scheme.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 282/99 Wednesday 8 December 1999

MP SUPPORTS TOP TEN TIPS FOR WINTER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a national advertising campaign run by the Department of Health designed to help people 'choose the right remedy this winter.' The aim is to offer practical information to guide through the range of health care choices available and make the best use of health and social care services this winter.

The MP said: 'There will be times over the winter holiday period when more people are likely to suffer minor ailments like coughs and colds brought on by colder weather. And in 1999, the extended millennium holiday period around Christmas and new Year will bring a new twist to familiar issues. The NHS are keen to let people know the healthcare options open to people and these can range from professional advice on the high street from a pharmacist and telephone help from the NHS Health Information Service .'

Note to Editors: The top ten tips include:
1. Before using a medicine always follow the instructions on the label.
2. Keep a small supply of paracetamol and other remedies in your medicine cabinet at home. 3. If you're not feeling well try and avoid unnecessary journeys, if you must go out wrap up warm. 4. Your pharmacist is qualified to give you expert advice without an appointment on how to treat many everyday health problems. 5. If you or your family is taking prescription medicines, make sure you are not going to run out on a bank holiday. 6. Find out the opening times of your local surgery and pharmacy over the holiday period. 7. The NHS Health Information Service provides free, confidential information on the availability of local services. The number is 0800 665544. 8. Remember, antibiotics don't work on colds, most coughs and sore throats - your pharmacist can advise on suitable remedies to help relieve symptoms. 9. If you or a member of your family are 75 or over or in a 'high risk' group, book an appointment at your surgery to get a flu jab. 10. Make sure you are registered with your local GP and keep a note of their emergency number in case you need a doctor out of hours.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 283/99 Wednesday 8 December 1999

CALLS FLOOD IN TO MINIMUM WAGE HELPLINE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging low paid constituents to blow the whistle on employers who are breaking the law by paying less than the National Minimum Wage, currently £3.60 per hour.

Speaking from Westminster today, the MP said: "Pendle is a low pay blackspot and a huge number of people locally benefited from the NMW when it was introduced this year. But I want to make sure everyone knows their rights. People can phone the Minimum Wage helpline and get the help they need. The number is 0845 8450360 and is open seven days a week from 8am to 8pm."

The MP was speaking after Trade and Industry Minister, Alan Johnson, had told him: "Since the introduction of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) on 1 April 1999 the helpline run by the Inland Revenue on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry has received some 95,000 calls. In addition, the NMW helpline arranged through the Central Office of Information took 50,000 enquiries in January to March 1999. The total number of calls received by NMW helplines is therefore over 145,000."

The Pendle MP added: "I am pressing the Prime Minister to give a commitment to uprate the NMW annually. We simply cannot allow its value to be eroded over time."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 284/99 Wednesday 8 December 1999

MP CALLS FOR NEW DIALOGUE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN OVER KASHMIR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, called today for a new dialogue between Pakistan and India over the future of Kashmir - the cause of three wars in the sub continent since partition.

The MP was speaking at Westminster this evening following a meeting with the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Sultan Mahmood Chaudry, and the new High Commissioner of Pakistan, Dr Akbar Ahmed.

The MP said: "Kashmir must not become the cause of another bloody conflict in the 21st century as it has been in the 20th. For India, a change in the status of Kashmir is

not even on their radar screens. They see Kashmir as an integral part of the Indian Union."

"I want to see India open up Jammu and Kashmir to outside observers such as Amnesty International. And the UN observers - who police the line of control - should be allowed to go where they wish in Jammu and Kashmir as is the case in Azad Kashmir. Crucially, members of the British Parliament should have free and open access to see for themselves what is happening over there."

The MP told the High Commissioner he hoped the new Government in Pakistan would set a firm timetable for the restoration of democratic Government.

Note to Editors: The MP visited Pakistan and Azad Kashmir in September on a fact finding mission - just before the military takeover in Pakistan. He also visited New Delhi for discussions with the Indian Foreign and Home Secretaries.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 285/99 Thursday 10 December 1999

CHANGE TO WAY BENEFITS ARE PAID IS NO THREAT TO POST OFFICES says MP

Planed changes to the ways in which benefits are paid pose no threat to the future of post offices says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "People have for many years been able to choose whether to receive pensions or benefits either through the Post Office or bank account. The Government's plans will still allow people to collect their pension or other benefit from the Post Office, if they choose to do so. The Government's modernisation programme is about providing a better service, both from the Post Office and the Benefits Agency."

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Note to Editors: The Government is to set out, for the first time, the minimum criteria for access to Post Office Counters' services. The strengthened consumer council for postal services will be monitoring at the local level. The Government is also ensuring that the post office network gets the investment it needs to continue to serve the community. Computerisation is crucial to the future of the counters network since it will allow the business to streamline its internal processes and offer an improved service to clients and customers. The computerisation project - called Horizon - inherited from the previous Government was immensely complex and was running some three years behind schedule with cost overruns. The project is now back on track. As a result, all 40,000 serving positions at over 18,000 Post Offices will be equipped with a modern on-line IT system by 2001.

The Benefits Agency will also be moving to a more efficient way of paying benefits. At present, pensions and benefits are often paid by giro cheque or order book. This is an expensive form of payment and is open to fraud. Added to that, more people want their money paid directly into their accounts. So from 2003, the Government plans to start paying pensions and benefits using the automated credit system. This has three advantages. It reduces the cost of red tape and makes the system more secure from fraud It also allows people to make use of a wider range of banking and financial services, such as direct debits which make it cheaper to pay some bills.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 286/99 Tuesday 14 December 1999

£1 BILLION CASH TO TACKLE SCHOOLS REPAIRS BACKLOG

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news that nearly £1 billion is to be made available for repairs and new building work at state schools across England for 2000-01. This is 35% more than the £720 million for 1999-2000 and 60% more than the previous Government's spending plans.

The Department for Education and Employment disclosed this week the allocations of £970 million in credit approvals and grants is part of a total investment of £5.5 billion over the next three years to provide better conditions for pupils and teachers to learn and teach in.

Lancashire gets £6,543,000 in credit approvals for building work at Community, Voluntary Controlled, Foundation and Special schools. In addition there is £4,788,235 in “formula capital” where a sum of money is passed to schools to spend on repairs and
refurbishment based on the number of pupils they have. £603,000 is allocated to the “Seed Challenge” capital initiative, schools which raise a significant proportion of the funding needed for capital projects - for example from local employers - will be able to receive top up cash from the fund to enable the project to go forward.

The MP said: “This is excellent news. Schools with crumbling buildings will be getting the help they deserve.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 287/99 Tuesday 14 December 1999

ENERGY CONSCIOUS MP CALLS FOR SOLAR PANELS AND WINDMILLS IN ALL NEW HOUSES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says all new houses should be built with solar panels incorporated in them. He says the energy saving would be enormous.

The MP was speaking at Westminster after Environment Minister Chris Mullin had told him that 2,000 new homes every year are fitted with solar panels.

The Minster said: “We understand that, in total, around 2,000 solar heating systems per year are typically being installed throughout the UK. My Department’s Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme, in encouraging good building design, advocates the incorporation of solar heating in appropriate cases. And the Department of Trade and Industry are working closely with the Solar Trade Association and others to promote good practice, to disseminate well-informed advice about solar heating and to support appropriate training.”

Gordon Prentice added: “I would also like to see small windmills fitted as a matter of course. These would be the size of a TV dish and would be fairly unobtrusive. Yet in windy areas such as East Lancashire they would generate an amazing amount of electricity - and it would be free.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 288/99 Wednesday 15 December 1999

IT’S GOOD-BYE SIR HUMPHREY

Far reaching changes to the Civil Service were announced by the Government today which will allow officials who meet targets to be fast tracked for promotion. There will also be renewed emphasis on getting more women and members of the ethnic minorities into the highest reaches of the Civil Service.

Pendle MP responded to the announcement by quizzing Cabinet Office Minister, Mo Mowlam, in the Commons this afternoon asking her if the changes meant Sir Humphrey Appleby was dead and buried.

The Pendle MP told the House there was some concern that the Civil Service was being politicised and some reassurance for the sceptics on this point was needed. He told the House there had to be complete transparency about the procedures for promoting and rewarding officials.

The Minister confirmed there were no plans to set up a Prime Minister's Department in Whitehall.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "The Civil Service is a unique institution with many virtues but it must change and adapt like any other."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 289/99 August 1999

MP TO MEET ROLLS ROYCE CHIEFS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, next month to discuss the implications of the company's strategy which could mean 90 redundancies at the Barnoldswick plant.

Workers from Rolls Royce plants around Britain converged on Westminster in April to lobby MPs about the threatened job losses.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The meeting with John Rose and the Rolls Royce top management is important and I am hopeful we can make some progress. Only last year, the Government gave Rolls Royce £200m to help develop the hugely successful Trent family of engines. I didn't expect this expression of support by my own Government to translate into job losses in my own town. The company is doing very well and profits have never been higher."

Last month the Rolls Royce Chief Executive told the MP that "all available means are being employed to avoid compulsory redundancy" at the Barnoldswick plant.

Note to Editors: The meeting will take place on Monday 21 June at the company's London HQ.

For Immediate Release. No 152/99 Monday 21 June 1999

ROLLS ROYCE POWERS AHEAD BUT REDUNDANCY THREAT PERSISTS

Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, predicted a rosy future for the aerospace company when he met Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today - but only if Rolls matches and then beats the productivity of its two main competitors, General Electric and Pratt and Whitney.

The two hour long meeting, involving Rolls Royce chiefs and MPs with RR plants in their constituencies, was called following bleak news in April that the company was looking for redundancies - including 90 in Barnoldswick - at a time when the £13 billion order book had never been bigger nor the profits fatter.

Speaking after the meeting at the company's Buckingham Gate HQ in central London, the Pendle MP said: "We discussed the possibilities for re-deployment and retraining and that must be the way forward at Barlick."

"When a company has to change to meet new market challenges, you don't automatically get rid of people. You look to fit them in elsewhere. In a company the size of RR employing highly skilled and motivated people, that is simple common sense. I was assured there was no target set by the centre for job reductions - it was up to local plants to identify and deliver efficiency savings. In my view, RR can only do this by keeping its workforce on board."

The MP added: "The company is committed to delivering double digit earnings growth to its shareholders - but it mustn't neglect the people who work for it. They have a big stake in the success of the firm. I told the Chief Executive that the people on the shop

more follows

floor had done their bit. Output has shot up by a staggering 60% over the past three years and the number of RR engines on the wing is growing by 8% compound every year."

"RR is growing fast and this is good news for the future. In 1996, the company delivered 424 aero engines. In 1997, 625 and last year 911. I was told the company is now looking to produce 1,100 engines. In 1987, RR engines were on 6 airframes; in 1997 they are on 30. By any standard these are impressive figures."

Summing up, the MP said: “It was a useful meeting and there was a frank exchange of views. We all recognise that Rolls Royce is hugely important for the UK - and for Barnoldswick. In fact the Labour Government expressed its confidence in the company last year by giving it £200m in launch aid to help develop the hugely successful Trent family of engines.”

“No-one wants to see any compulsory redundancies and I am keeping my fingers crossed they won’t happen.”

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 290/99 Monday 13 December 1999

MP TO GIVE WESTMINSTER WELCOME TO THE COUNTRY’S OLD SOLDIERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be saying hello again to some of the country’s old soldiers at the Royal British Legion's Parliamentary Open Day in the Palace of Westminster tomorrow (Tuesday 14 December).

The MP said: "I shall be meeting the Lancashire County Field Officer, Robert Ellis, and others from the British Legion. I have met Robert many times at the Remembrance Day parade in Colne when we reflect on the enormous debt we owe to those who fought and died defending our country and its freedoms."

Every year the MP remembers the fallen at Remembrance Day parades and services in Nelson, Colne and Barnoldswick.

Embargoed until Thursday 16 December No 291/99

MP WELCOMES NEW OPPORTUNITIES AT LAKEVIEW

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is delighted to learn that a nursery in Colne has been offered a grant of £27,000 under the New Opportunities Fund’s Out of School Hours Childcare scheme. The nursery will be creating 30 before and 30 after school places for children aged 5 - 14.

The MP said: ‘This is splendid news, this scheme will provide a safe, secure and enjoyable environment for school age children whose parents are at work.’

The New Opportunities Fund is responsible for distributing National Lottery grants throughout the UK, for health, education and environment initiatives. Over the next four years they will be allocating £220 million from the proceeds of the National Lottery to create out of school hours childcare places for 865,000 children.

For immediate release No 292/99 Wednesday 15 December 1999

MP SUPPORTS SPECIAL PAYMENT FOR FAR EAST PRISIONERS OF WAR

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has written to the Prime Minister urging him to consider a special gratuity for former British Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWs). The letter comes following a meeting with the British Legions Lancashire Field Officer, Bob Ellis, at Westminster.

The MP said: ‘Up to now the PoWs have only received a maximum of £76 in compensation and Bob Ellis has told me that the Canadian Government has recently decided to make an ex-gratia payment of the equivalent of £10,000 to its FEPOWs. Surely it is high time for the British Government to follow their lead and ensure proper compensation for surviving former FEPOWs or their widows.’

The MP continued: ‘This campaign has support both publicy and in the House of Commons. The £76 that has been paid out so far is just embarassing and I fully back the Legions call for fair compensation in recognition of the especially severe suffering experienced by prisioners of the Japanese.’

Note to editor: The letter to the PM reads: As you will know the Royal British Legion held its annual Parliamentary Open Day at Westminster yesterday (14 December) and it is clear to me that the Legion feels very strongly indeed that the British Government should follow the example of the Canadians in paying a special grant to former British Far East PoWs. The Legion tells me that the FEPOWs have only ever received a maximum of £76 in compensation and that the British Government of 1955 deliberately avoided pressing for further compensation under the terms of the 1951 Peace Treaty when it was open to do so. With this in mind and in light of the recent decision by the Canadian Government to make an ex-gratia payment of the equivalent of £10,000 to its FEPOWs the Legion tell me that they approached you for a meeting in October but unfortunately your diary couldn’t accomodate them at that time. I hope that you will seriously consider the Legion’s request for a Special Gratuity to be paid as I know that it has wide support, not only from the public, but also in the Commons.

For Immediate Release. No 293/99 Wednesday 15 December 1999

ANOTHER FALL IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance stood at 1,317 (1,358 in October) -
an unemployment rate of 3.8%. There were 957 men and 360 women out of work. The corresponding figures in October were respectively 1,004 and 354 .

Nationally, unemployment has fallen to its lowest level for nearly 20 years. The Office for National Statistics confirmed that the level has fallen by an average of 15,500 a month over the past six months. There were a record 27,500,000 people in work in the three months to October, a rise of 271,000 over the year, and one of the best figures on record.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: “Another fall in the figures for Pendle is further evidence that the country’s economic stability is helping to create a healthy labour market.”

For Immediate Release. No 294/99 Thursday 16 December 1999

DENTISTS WILL HAVE TO KEEP THEIR SKILLS “RAZOR SHARP” says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says dentists in future will have to keep their skills and the treatments they offer their patients “bang up to date” if they are to continue in practice.

New proposals from the Government will mean that dentists who do not participate in continuing education and training would lose their registration - and with it their right to practice.

The MP asked Health Minister, John Hutton, what steps he was taking to encourage dentists to keep abreast of new developments.

The Minister told the MP: “The General Dental Council has agreed proposals with the dental profession for a 'recertification' scheme whereby dentists would not be allowed to remain registered unless they showed evidence that they were participating in continuing education and training. We support these proposals and are drawing up an order to make the necessary amendments to the Dentists Act 1984 by means of Section 60 of the Health Act 1999.”

The MP, who has famously described East Lancashire as a dental desert because of the shortage of dentists, has long pressed the Government to give the area the priority it deserves. The dental health of children in East Lancashire is amongst the worst in the country.

For Immediate Release. No 295/99 Tuesday 21 December 1999

MP HAILS BIG BOOST IN LOCAL HEALTH SPENDING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed news of a big boost in NHS spending in East Lancashire. In a letter to the MP, the Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, revealed that the East Lancashire Health Authority is to receive an allocation of £376.78 million next year - an increase of 7.1%.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: “This is a splendid tonic for my area. It is just what we need. The Government deserves a pat on the back!”

The MP added: “Today's Conservatives believe that improvements in health care can only come through an expansion of the private sector. They may claim they want to supplement the NHS with private healthcare but by promising to squeeze NHS spending while focusing solely on urgent conditions - as their Patient Guarantee states - they will force patients to pay privately for many operations, such as hip replacements and cataracts.”

Note to Editor: The Health Secretary’s letter to the Pendle MP reads:

Dear Gordon, I have today announced large funding increases for every Health Authority in England, The average increase for 2000/2001 is 6.78%, compared to 6.60% for 1999/2000.

These resources represent additional money for modernisation: to help create the fast, fair and convenient health services that patients expect.

All Health Authorities will get 6.21 % as a minimum increase. East Lancashire Health Authority will receive an allocation of £376.78 million for 2000/2001. This is an increase of 7. 1%. These allocations are another step in the Government’s ten year modernisation programme for the NHS.

For Immediate Release. No 296/99 Tuesday 21 December 1999

PENDLE MP TELLS GOVERNMENT TO THINK AGAIN OVER AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged the Government to think twice about its plans to change the publicly owned status of National Air Traffic Services (NATS) - the people responsible for air traffic control. The Government wants to fund investment in NATS by creating a PPP (Public Private Partnership) with a 49% share retained by the Government and with 46% going to the private sector and 5% to employees.

In a Commons debate on the Transport Bill yesterday, the MP, who is no stranger to controversy, said: “I have reservations about the public-private partnership for NATS. The Conservatives who privatised anything and everything that was not nailed down backed away from privatising NATS as too hot to handle.”

The MP continued: “Amazingly, we are picking up the privatisation issue--hot to handle though it may be. If the air traffic controllers are against it, apparently it is their problem. If the pilots flying the planes are against it, apparently it is their problem. If 50 Labour MPs point out that the proposal was not in the Labour manifesto in May 1997, word goes out that it is their problem. I can only say that if the Government do not address the concerns of many people, both here in the Commons and outside, it will be our problem.”

The MP added: “We do not need to part-privatise NATS; it could be turned into an independent, publicly owned company based on the Post Office model. We should have all the options and all the pros and cons set out, rather than just the Government’s preferred option, on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.“

For Immediate Release. No 297/99 Tuesday 21 December 1999

24% FALL IN PENDLE JOBLESS SINCE THE ELECTION

The following information is from the TUC: The TUC has analysed claimant count unemployment figures in the Pendle constituency to examine trends since the election. We have compared figures for October 1999 and those of three years earlier October 1996. October 1999 is the most recent set of figures available, and to iron out seasonal variations the best month with which to compare these figures before the 1997 election is October 1996.

Overall unemployment
In the Pendle constituency unemployment stood at 1,756 in October 1996. By October 1999 the total had fallen to 1,335, a change of -421 or -24%.

The New Deal groups
The target group for the youth New Deal programme is 18-24 year olds who are unemployed for more than 6 months. In October 1996, 149 fell into this group in the Pendle constituency. By October 1999 the number had fallen to 50 - a change of -99 or -66.4%.

The second group to be targeted are the over 25s unemployed for more than 2 years. In 1996 there were 131 in this group in the Pendle constituency. By October 1999 it had fallen to 30 - a
change of -101 or -77.1%, This compares to a fall of 64% nationally.

Commenting on the figures, Pendle's MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Getting people into work is a top priority for this Government. The figures are encouraging although we have set-backs and difficulties in Pendle just like everywhere else."

For Immediate Release. No 298/99 Tuesday 21 December 1999

BBC SHOULD GET CASH TO DEVELOP DIGITAL SERVICES says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called on Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, to make sure the BBC gets the cash it needs to develop its new digital services.

The MP was speaking at Westminster following the publication of a uncompromisingly critical report from the Culture and Media Select Committee dismissing BBC pleas for a top up licence fee for those with access to the digital services.

The Pendle MP said: "The Chair of the Committee, the veteran Labour MP, Gerald Kaufman has long argued that the BBC should stick to its "core business" and leave the development of new services to others. I think that would be a big mistake. The BBC's new internet services are outstanding and its digital television channels, small

though the audience may be at the moment, will undoubtedly develop and, I hope, flourish. The BBC is a national institution we all cherish. I want it to continue to be a market leader."

Note to Editors: The Commons motion tabled by the Pendle MP reads:

That this House notes the publication of the Third Report from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee on Funding of the BBC; regrets its recommendation that the BBC should receive no extra funding for the development of its digital services; believes that the BBC is the only British broadcasting organisation capable of playing a major role in the emerging global multi-media market and should be funded to carry out that task; and urges the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that this happens by whatever means he believes necessary.

For Immediate Release. No 299/99 Tuesday 21 December 1999

MP PAYS TRIBUTE TO PENDLE CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS AS GOVERNMENT WIPES OUT THIRD WORLD DEBT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed Gordon Brown's announcement today that will see Britain write off 100% of bilateral debt for the world's poorest countries. The MP paid tribute to the churches and community groups in Pendle who campaigned for debt relief for the world's poorest countries.

Gordon Prentice said, "This is a significant move as we enter a new Millennium. Hundreds of millions of pounds of debt will be written off and will be spent reducing poverty in the world's poorest countries - not bureaucracy, corruption or weapons. By linking the relief directly to poverty reduction, help will be targeted on the most crucial areas - improving healthcare and education among them. The Ugandan government has indicated that every penny saved in debt relief will go towards halving the teacher:pupil ratio and a new school building programme."

"The countries helped will drive forward their own poverty strategies, in consultation with civic society and the World Bank and IMF. These strategies will be explicitly linked to achieving agreed international development goals, so at every stage tackling poverty is driving the process."

Note to Editors: Chancellor Gordon Brown and Development Secretary Clare Short announced the new debt relief initiative at a Downing Street seminar with church and community leaders. The initiative means that Britain will write off all bilateral debt owed by the world's poorest countries. The debt relief will be linked to poverty relief. They also outlined plans to deliver a timetable for securing country-by-country debt relief agreements under the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor countries (HIPC) initiative. By the end of 2000, 25 countries should start receiving funds from debt relief.

For Immediate Release. No 221/99 Wednesday 22 September 1999

ROGUE LANDLORDS TOLD TO PAY UP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has won a commitment from the Government to clamp down on rogue landlords who refuse to return deposits to tenants at the end of their tenancy.

The MP said: “The vast majority of landlords return the bond as soon as they have checked the property has been left in good order but there are instances here in Pendle where landlords hang on to the cash. I pursued this matter with Nick Raynsford, Minister for Housing, after a number of complaints from exasperated constituents. They were at their wits end, trying to get their money back. In some cases, up to £800 was withheld for no good reason.”

The MP continued: “The Government has promised a pilot scheme where tenants’ deposits can be held safely with an independent arbitration service to deal with disputes. This will be up and running early next year. However, I want to see the scheme introduced throughout the country at the earliest opportunity.”

Note 1 to Editors:
The letter from the Minister to the Pendle MP reads - ‘The Government is concerned about the problem tenants face in getting their deposits returned. Tenants should not be losing part or all of their deposit at the end of the tenancy and they certainly deserve a proper explanation from their landlord if they do so.
We have looked at legislation operating in other countries to see whether it could be used as an appropriate model for dealing with the problems in this country. In Australia, for example, there are compulsory schemes under which the deposit and the resolution of disputes about who has best claim to it at the end of the tenancy are managed independently. However, before considering a similar arrangement in England, which would require legislation and would entail some bureaucracy, we want to see whether we could achieve similar results by voluntary means.

more follows....

ROGUE LANDLORDS TOLD TO PAY UP

We are therefore proposing a voluntary, self-financing scheme to ensure that tenants’ deposits are held safely and to provide an independent arbitration service to deal with disputes. Meetings have recently taken place between the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, landlord and tenant organisations with the aim of starting a pilot scheme early next year. It has been made clear that if such a scheme does not succeed we will consider legislating for a compulsory scheme.’

Note 2 to Editors: The MP voiced his concerns with local landlords at a meeting in Nelson in June.

For Immediate Release. No 01/00 Thursday 6 January 2000

MP HELPS CHILDREN TO READ - WITH HIS CHRISTMAS CARDS!!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will again be supporting a card re-cycling scheme run by the Post Office, the beneficiaries of which are primary school children. In return for re-cycling Christmas cards and envelopes the Post Office provide homework and reading diaries to help parents and teachers improve literacy skills for children.

The MP said: “I am very pleased to once again be supporting this excellent scheme and I urge everyone to take their Christmas cards from work or home along to one of the main post offices in Pendle. I get a tremendous amount of cards at my office and it is good to know that they are not just ending up as waste paper.”

So far the scheme, now in its fifth year, has managed to recycle over 3,500 tonnes of card and the Post Office are confident that this year will be as successful as before.

The scheme, which has the backing of the education authorities, runs until 29 January 2000.

For Immediate Release. No 02/00 Monday 10 January 2000

FLU - VACCINATE EVERYONE SAYS PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for mass vaccination against the current flu outbreak which has gripped the nation. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This strain of flu is very virulent and while the needs of the elderly and the most vulnerable must always come first, there is a powerful case for vaccinating the population at large."

The MP continued: "A quick jab would be just the job to help guard against this menace."

The Chief Medical Officer Prof. Liam Donaldson believes that the true incidence of flu is being masked by the existence this year of NHS Direct (which does not yet cover the entire country) and the campaign to get people to visit the pharmacist and treat themselves for flu. This means that many more people have had the flu than are showing up in the official figures - which are based on visits to GP surgeries.

The MP added: "In addition to campaigns such as 'Flu Awareness Week' and 'Keep Warm, Keep Well', the Department of Health launched a public information campaign: 'Choose the Right Remedy this Winter'. Its aim was to encourage people to consider the whole range of options open to them including self care and a visit to the local pharmacy. Our chemists have seen it all before."

"We all rely on NHS staff to get us through these crises. And we know there are too few doctors and nurses. But the Government is doing something about it. In February it launched a national recruitment campaign to encourage nurses to come back to the NHS. Since then, 1,780 nurses have returned to the NHS, with a further 2,500 nurses on or about to start return to practice courses. That's good news."

more follows

FLU - VACCINATE EVERYONE SAYS PENDLE MP

In the period 20 December 1999 - 6 January 2000:

* Over half a million people have attended NHS A&E departments

* There have been 157,000 emergency admissions to NHS hospitals

* Ambulance Services have taken 235,000 999 calls

* NHS Direct Nurses have taken 209,000 calls from the public

Comparative figures for the week ending 2 January compared with the week ending 14 October:

* 999 calls have increased by 52% for the week ending 2 January, compared with week ending 14 October (73,922 to 112,536)

* Emergency admissions have increased by 32% for week ending 2

January, compared with week ending 14 October (58,299 to 71,356)

* A&E attendances have risen by 13% for the week ending 2 January compared with week ending 14 October (203,822 to 230,816)

* GP out-of-hours calls are 14% higher this winter than last winter.

For Immediate Release. No 03/00 Monday 10 January 2000

PENDLE MP RECYCLES YESTERDAY'S NEWS

Campaigning Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, wants newspaper owners to boost the recycled content of the newsprint they use. He says this makes economic and environmental sense.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP presented his Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill which comes up for second reading on 24 March. The MP said: "Because of Parliamentary procedures it is unlikely my Bill will make enough progress to get on to the statute book, but if flags up a real issue of concern to many people. If it were to succeed, the Bill could play a major role in preventing the newspaper industry from damaging forests and wildlife. Friends of the Earth - who helped draft the Bill -claim it could also create 10,000 new jobs and cut Britain's import bill by £175 million.

The Bill requires the recycled content of newspapers to be increased from 40% to 80% by 2010.

A similar Bill was presented last year by Bury MP, David Chaytor, but it fell. At the time, FoE commented: "World demand for wood and paper has helped destroy over 95% of the old, wildlife-rich natural forest in Scandinavia. It has been replaced with intensively-managed wildlife-poor forest. In Sweden alone, forest destruction has led to more than 1,700 species of plant and animal being put at risk, including the White-backed Woodpecker and the Capercaillie."

"The last remnants of Scandinavian natural forest are still being destroyed and the loggers are now moving into Russia to satisfy the demand for more and more paper. The UK is the world's fifth largest consumer of paper, and our paper consumption is predicted to increase by two thirds between 1990 and 2010.

more follows

PENDLE MP RECYCLES YESTERDAY'S NEWS

Increasing the recycled content of newsprint will save more than the equivalent of 5 million trees every year."

"To meet the targets in the Bill will require the recycling rate of newspapers and magazines to increase from about a quarter to a half or more. Norway and Sweden already recycle at a higher rate than this. The Bill will reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, which causes a third of all groundwater pollution and generates methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. It will also reduce the need for incineration,

which causes up to £126 worth of health and environmental damage for every tonne of waste burnt."

Note to Editors: The UK newspaper industry currently uses 40% recycled newsprint - virtually all manufactured in the UK - and 60% virgin newsprint - mainly manufactured in Scandinavia and Canada. The Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill aims to increase the recycled content of newspapers to 80% by 2010, with interim targets of 65% by 2003 and 70% by 2006. The research commissioned during the drafting of the Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill suggests that:

* 65 % recycled content by 2003 will create 5,880 new jobs and reduce UK imports by £106 million.
* 70 % recycled content by 2006 will create 7,080 new jobs and reduce UK imports by £127 million.
* 80 % recycled content by 2010 will create 9,720 new jobs and reduce UK imports by £175 million.

For Immediate Release. No 04/00 Tuesday 11 January 2000

PARISH COUNCILS TO STAY - OFFICIAL

The Government has no intention of abolishing parish and town councils according to local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was speaking at Westminster following confirmation from Environment Minister, Beverley Hughes, that parish and town councils are here to stay. The MP raised the issue following concerns in Pendle that this tier of local government was to be swept away.

The Minister told the MP: "Despite the misleading impression given in the article published in the Sunday Times on 3 October, I can assure you that the Government has no plans to abolish parish councils. Parish councils, being the tier of local government closest to the citizen, have an important part to play in local decision making and provide a valuable opportunity for local people to take part in managing their environment."

Gordon Prentice added: "I never believed for a moment that parish and town councils were under threat. On the whole, they do a very good job."

For Immediate Release. No 05/00 Tuesday 11 January 2000

MP SEEKS ILLUMINATION FROM YORKSHIRE ELECTRICITY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is putting the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Electricity under the spotlight following damning reports about street lights in Earby. The MP wants to know why the people in the town are being left in the dark as a result of power failures.

The MP said: “My constituents in Earby seem to be having more than their fair share of problems with these power failures. The cabling system is over fifty years old and when a fuse blows it can affect up to twenty street lights. In fact there was a major incident last year when houses were plunged into darkness and street lights went out.”

The MP continued: “No one likes to walk down dark streets but this is going to continue unless Yorkshire Electricity gets its act together and replaces these ancient cables. I have written to Graham Hall, the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Electricity, to find out when this vital work will be carried out.

Note to editor: The MP has also written to Lancashire County Council to see what it can do to help.

For Immediate Release. No 06/00 Tuesday 18 January 2000

MP BACKS FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is supporting a Private Members Bill on Fire Prevention being brought by his colleague Burnley MP, Peter Pike. The main purpose of the Bill is to place a duty on Fire Autorities to undertake work to reduce fires, deaths and injuries.

The Pendle MP said: “The majority of domestic fires are preventable and it only requires fairly simple steps to reduce them in number. National and local campaigns have a great effect in making people aware of how to avoid fires, the recent Smoke Alarm campaign being a good example.”

The MP continued: “Unfortunately prevention work is still not considered a priority, new legislation placing a duty for the fire brigade to undertake fire safety education would remedt this situation. I fully support this Bill.”

For Immediate Release. No 06/00 Wednesday 12 January 2000

MP RENEWS CALL FOR EARLY ACTION TO END DEADLY POLICE CAR CHASES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has renewed his call for the immediate implementation of new rules covering the way police drivers respond to emergencies. In March last year, the Pendle MP shocked the nation when he revealed statistics showing that thousands people are injured in accidents every year involving police cars answering 999 calls or in pursuits.

The MP unearthed the horrifying roll call of accident victims after Channel 4 news reader, Sheena McDonald, tragically hit the headlines in February last year when she was injured by a speeding police car when walking in Islington.

The case is now being heard at the Horseferry Road Magistrates Court in London where the driver of the police van, Glenn Whiteley, 27, has pleaded not guilty to

driving without due care and attention. The van was travelling with sirens on and flashing lights but was on the wrong side of the road when it hit Ms McDonald.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “I want to see black boxes - of the type routinely fitted in planes - installed in police vehicles. Unfortunately, this doesn’t happen at the moment although the Metropolitan Police is looking into it.”

In 1997/8, 2,123 people were injured and 15 killed by police cars answering emergencies. The number of fatalities for 1998/9 rose to 19. Last year, Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, told the Pendle MP that police chiefs were looking at a report which recommended tightening up the procedures and improving the training of police officers who sit behind the wheel.

more follows

MP RENEWS CALL FOR EARLY ACTION TO END DEADLY POLICE CAR CHASES

The MP added: “The Association of Chief Police Officers set up a working party to look into pursuit driver training and the group, led by the Deputy Chief Constable of Wiltshire, Rodney Lind, came forward in September 1998 with no fewer than 33 recommendations for action.”

“They want to see a co-ordinated national approach to driver training and that’s good. They want to see communication systems in police vehicles being able to be operated hands free and that makes sense. And they also want line managers to take more responsibility for the supervision and development of driving skills which should be reviewed annually through an appraisal
system. And, finally, they want forces to keep details of police drivers’ accident history within a system which enables high risk drivers to be identified for review.”

“These are all common-sense procedures and rules which should be implemented nationwide and without any further delay.”

For Immediate Release. No 07/00 Wednesday 12 January 2000

MP RENEWS CALL FOR EARLY ACTION TO END DEADLY POLICE CAR CHASES

<u>LOCAL DATA</u> this complements Press Release 06/00 of today’s date.

Police accidents during pursuits and emergency responses - Lancashire and North Yorkshire from 1993 onwards

	1993	94/5	95/6	96/7	97/8	total
Lancs	55	72	89	85	53	354
North Yorks	81	68	51	48	51	299

source- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 08/00 Thursday 13 January 2000

MP TO MEET CARE HOME OWNERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is meeting with local Care Home owners and a representative from Lancashire Care Association next Friday (21 January) at Marsden Heights Nursing Home as he fields questions on a wide range of concerns. The Government is putting through a Care Standards Bill which will regulate Care Services in England and Wales and the MP will be quizzed on the implications to Care Home owners of the Bill.

The MP said: "Care Homes provide a vital service to some of our most vulnerable citizens and they deserve top class treatment wherever they are - in private or local authority homes. The introduction of national standards will iron out variations in levels of care and many Homes will currently be meeting all of the proposed standards and will have little or no extra costs."

Note to Editor: 1. In November 1998 and March 1999, the Government published two White Papers on its proposals for social services in England and Wales. Detailed proposals for the regulation of private and voluntary healthcare in England and for the regulation and inspection of social care and healthcare services in Wales were set out in consultation documents issued in 1999.
2. The main purpose of the Bill is to reform the regulatory system for care services in England and Wales. Care services range from residential care homes and nursing homes, children's homes, domiciliary care agencies, fostering agencies and voluntary adoption agencies through to private and voluntary healthcare services (including private hospitals and clinics and private primary care premises). For the first time, local authorities will be required to meet the same standards as independent sector providers.
3. In England and the Bill provides for an independent National Care Standards Commission to undertake this regulatory function.
4. The numbers of independent residential and nursing care homes in England at 31 March 1997 and 1998 are 26,600 and 26,700 respectively.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 09/00 Monday 17 January 2000

MP CHEERS FOR CCTV SUCCESS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is delighted with the news that Nelson has been successful in its bid for CCTV in the town centre. The MP has long supported the call for cameras and wrote to Home Secretary, Jack Straw, in August last year to press him to give Pendle a slice of the money.

The MP said: "This is great news for Nelson. Both local business and the general public have been crying out for cameras. Brierfield has had this technology since July of last year and it has already proved to be a success in catching criminals. CCTV is not a substitute for police on the beat but the two together will make law breakers think twice."

The MP continued: "Despite what the Doubting Thomas's have said CCTV makes a real difference. I want to see other areas of Pendle benefit."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 10/00 Wednesday 19 January 2000

PENDLE FOLK SPEND £25m ON LOTTERY TICKETS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has today called for a greater share of lottery money for Pendle as new details emerged about the pattern of National Lottery ticket sales across the country. The staggering sum of over £25 million was spent on tickets in

Pendle in the first five years of the lottery according to figures unearthed by the MP. This works out at an average of £378 per adult - assuming every adult in Pendle buys tickets!

Over the 5 year period 33 awards were allocated to Pendle with a total value of £3,356,737 and the beneficiaries of some of the largest amounts include Burnley and Pendle Hospice (£391,363), Colne Municipal Hall (£420,000), West Craven Sports Centre (£1,012,100), the Heritage Centre at Barrowford (£250,000) and the Ethnic Minority Benevolent Association (£444,213).

The MP said: "The average amount spent buying lottery tickets per constituency is over £38m so we in Pendle are well below the average. By 26 October 1999 Camelot had total sales of £24.6 billion. Of this £11.7 billion has been given out in prize money and £7.5 billion passed to good causes."

The MP continued: "The lottery was set up to give a proportion of its profits to charities and community groups. Pendle gets a 13% return for its spending and I would like to see a lot more money coming back and benefiting organisations not just in Pendle but throughout the country."

Note to editor: The total sales for the first five years of The National Lottery in Pendle was £25,042,920. This compares to an average for UK constituencies of £38,249,707. Pendle came in at position 435 out of 659 constituencies by total value of awards where number 1 gets the most money and number 659 the least.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 11/00 Monday 17 January 2000

NHS PAY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the big boost in pay for all NHS staff covered by the independent Pay Review Bodies. Today's announcement will be paid in full, without staging.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is splendid news. Everyone employed by the NHS does a vitally important job. We never know when we, as individuals, may have to rely on their skills and expertise. It is right that they should get decent pay."

60,000 experienced nurses at the maximum of their scale in Grade E are to receive a 7.8% increase. These are the largest single group of nurses within the profession.

"By any standard, this is a pretty good settlement."

Note to Editors: The Government has accepted in full the pay increases for 2000/01 recommended by the Doctor's and Dentist's Review Body (DDRB) and the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine (NPRB). These will be paid in full, without staging, from 1 April 2000.

The Government has also announced a ground-breaking 3 year pay offer for non pay review body staff. In each of the first two years of the deal over 70,000 of the lowest paid staff in the NHS will get proportionately more
pay. As a result of this increase no NHS employee will be paid less than £4 per hour.

* This is a fair pay rise for doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, health visitors, therapists and other health professionals.

* In particular, it will help recruit more nurses into the NHS. Experienced staff nurses will also get extra pay to make it more worth their while to continue nursing in the NHS.

* After years in which pay rises were staged, it is right that they should be paid in full. For the second year in succession staff at the

more follows

forefront of delivering patient care will receive pay rises well ahead of inflation.

A new television advertising campaign designed to recruit more nurses will be launched next month.

Latest figures show that since the start of the Government's national recruitment campaign, almost 2,600 nurses and midwives have returned to employment in the NHS and a further 2,500 are in training to do so.

As well as these 5,000 nurses, this year there are 4,500 more training places for nurses and midwives than there were three years ago.

UCAS figures released on 2 January show that there has been a 24% increase in the numbers taking up nurse degree courses this year. Applications for midwifery training have risen by 50%. There has also been a two fold increase in applications from men and from the ethnic minority communities.

Details of Pay Announcement

Nurses: 60,000 experienced nurses at the maximum of their scale in Grade E are to receive a 7.8% increase. These are the largest single group of nurses within the profession. A 3.4% increase in the basic pay of all nurses, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine (PAMs)

5,500 long-serving enrolled nurses and nurse auxiliaries in Grade C are to receive a 7% increase. 4,500 experienced PAMs in Senior 2 grade (such as physiotherapists) are to receive increases worth between 8.1% and 8.4%

As a result of today's announcement the basic salary of Grade E nurses (mainly experienced staff nurses) at the top of their scale will rise from £17,830 to £19,220 - an increase of £1390. The starting pay for newly qualified nurses (in Grade D) will rise from £14,400 to £14,890.

Doctors and Dentists: Hospital doctors and dentists will receive an increase of 3.3%. The pay element of general medical practitioners (GMP) fees will also increase by 3.3%.

Junior doctors also stand to receive significant pay rises over the coming months. In addition to the 3.3% increase in basic pay announced today, the agreement reached with the Junior Doctors Committee's negotiators about the framework of a new pay structure, as part of the negotiations for a new contract, would in the first year from October 2000 add around 6% to the junior doctors' pay bill.

The Government is also accepting the Review Body's recommendation of a further £20 million, subject to negotiation, to reward dentists' commitment to NHS dentistry and to recognise experience and quality of service. This will support the Government's dental strategy.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 12/00 Monday 17 January 2000

MP DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN NATIONAL NETWORK OF POST OFFICES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet local sub post masters and mistresses on Friday (21 January) to hear their concerns about the future of the Post Office network.

The MP was speaking at Westminster as a Commons debate got under way on the Post Office.

The MP said: "There are anxieties here in Pendle, as elsewhere, but I hope to be able to reassure local sub post masters and mistresses that the changes that are coming in will not jeopardise their livelihoods. Our post offices are a vitally important focus of many local communities - especially in rural areas."

The Government has given a commitment to computerise the entire Post Office network by the spring of 2001. Social Security payments will be made by automated credit transfer from 2003.

The Post Office is installing 3,000 cash machines in post offices as part of their drive to re-introduce banking services in rural areas. At present, there are only a few hundred cash machines.

Note to Editors: * The Labour Government is absolutely committed to a national network of Post Offices. The previous Government spent two years trying to privatise the Post Office, two years trying

to plunder it - through taking £1 billion out over 3 years through the External Financing Limit - and they created a flawed project for computerisation of the post office network that the Trade and Industry Select Committee said was "blighted from the outset."

* The Government's proposals outlined in the Post Office White Paper, to let the Post Office keep more of its profits, and to allow it to borrow, will enable the Post Office to provide new services and features that will help to modernise the Post Office and therefore build up new business for the

more follows

MP DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN NATIONAL NETWORK OF POST OFFICES

Post Office network.

* The Government has now arranged the Horizon project so that computerisation will be available in all Post Offices from 2001. This will allow the Post Office to build up new business, a crucial step not least

because at present there is an increasing trend over time for people to voluntarily move to ACT. Without action, this would have made maintenance of the Post Office network almost impossible. Horizon will provide a modern on-line IT system that gives the network the potential to re-introduce banking facilities into rural areas where they disappeared long ago (only 5% of villages have a bank whilst 60% have a Post Office) as well as attracting other new opportunities as we fulfil our pledge to provide all Government services on-line by 2008.

* The Post Office White Paper also makes clear that access criteria will be written into law for the first time. These will be the bench-mark against which the revamped and more powerful Post Office Users National Council (POUNC) and the new independent regulator - the Postal Services Commissioner - will monitor and evaluate the development of the network.

* The Government has made clear that the transfer to ACT will not begin until computerisation is well underway. The switch to ACT will begin in 2003 but will not be completed until 2005. It will make sure that everyone who wants to draw cash from a Post Office will be able to do so and will be able to withdraw every penny of their entitlement. It will also make sure that at the end of the period in 2005, those who do not have bank accounts are catered for.

* In addition to the Post Office White Paper , the Government is showing how aware of the situation it is by having commissioned the Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) in the Cabinet Office - which reports directly to the PM - to produce a report in the next few months to identify the Post Office's contribution to communities, to consider how the Post Office network can best contribute to the Government's objectives for the future and to formulate objectives for the network itself.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 13/00 Tuesday 18 January 2000

MP BACKS FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is supporting a Private Members' Bill on Fire Prevention being brought by his colleague Burnley MP, Peter Pike. The main purpose of the Bill is to place a duty on Fire Autorities to undertake work to reduce fires, deaths and injuries.

The Pendle MP said: "The majority of domestic fires are preventable and it only requires fairly simple steps to reduce them in number. National and local campaigns have a great effect in making people aware of how to avoid fires, the recent Smoke Alarm campaign being a good example."

The MP continued: "Unfortunately prevention work is still not considered a priority, new legislation placing a duty for the fire brigade to undertake fire safety education would remedt this situation. I fully support this Bill."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 14/00 Monday 17 January 2000

MP WELCOMES 8% INCREASE IN SCHOOL BUDGETS

News that Pendle school budgets are to be increased, on average, by at least 8% in the year 2000/01 has been warmly welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was responding to a letter (attached) from the Chair of Lancashire's Education and Cultural Services Committee, Hazel Harding, who told the MP: "There is a great deal of good news, particularly for our schools, who will receive, on average, an increase in their budgets of at least 8%. The exact figures of course will depend on pupil numbers, as always, and therefore will vary from school to school... It may be that this figure will be increased still further as there are a number of outstanding issues."

The letter continued: "We have also been able to meet the expectation of the Secretary of State that all the increased funding which the County Council received be passported to education."

The MP said: “I am sure our local schools will be delighted. It is worth noting - given all the brick bats that Lancashire gets from its critics - that its spending on administration is below the average for all LEAs in England.”

Note to Editors: In 1997/8, administration as a percentage of total education expenditure was 3.31% in Lancashire. The average was 3.59%. For 2000/01, administration costs per pupil per year will be under £65.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 15/00 Tuesday 18 January 2000

YORKSHIRE ELECTRICITY BLAMES PRICE CONTROLS AS IT PLANS TO LAY OFF 350

Yorkshire Electricity, which supplies about one third of Pendle, is to cut its workforce by 350 according to a letter from the company’s Chief Executive, Graham Hall, to local MP, Gordon Prentice. The company blames new price controls impose by the electricity regulator, Ofgem.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “I want the company to have a re-think. Over the years, Yorkshire Electricity, like the other privatised electricity companies, has been raking in the profits. Last year, £217m. The year before, £150m. Since the 1990 privatisation, the company has made £1,217 million profit. From 1990-97, Yorkshire Electricity lost 40% of its workforce.”

Note to Editors: The letter dated 17 January from the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Electricity to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, reads:

Public Electricity Price Reviews

You may recall that our Managing Director, Distribution, Tudor Townsend wrote to you in October about the progress of the Distribution Price Control Review being carried out by Ofgem. This review together with a review of Supply businesses has now been completed. I thought therefore that it would be appropriate to update you on the outcome and its effects on our Region.

As you will have seen, the effect of the reviews will be to substantially reduce revenues for most companies from April 2000. In Distribution, the Regulator based his review on the premise that companies should be able move a considerable way towards matching the costs of those companies with the lowest costs. In Supply, he has increased considerably the effect competition will have, whilst reducing the flexibility of companies to charge cost reflective prices.

As a result both Distribution and Supply businesses are faced with a requirement to substantially reduce costs. We are taking a radical look at

more follows

the whole of our cost base, but, as a substantial proportion of this relates to staff costs, there will be an inevitable requirement for part of the savings to come from reduced staffing. We have, therefore, announced to our staff in our Distribution and Supply Businesses, our intention to reduce our total workforce by around 350 during the year 2000, together with the closure of a number of local depots. We will be consulting with our staff and their trades unions in order to mitigate, as far as possible, the effects of this reduction.

We have looked very carefully at the service we will be able to deliver with this reduced staffing, and believe it will be possible to maintain our current levels. We will, of course, be striving for improvements within the constraints set by the price reviews. Above all, we have satisfied ourselves that our current very high standards of safety of both staff and the public will be maintained.

We at Yorkshire Electricity are committed to delivering a high quality service to our region, We understand that to do this we need to get the correct balance between price and service quality. The distribution price set by the Regulator is very tight. Our aim during the coming years will be to ensure this does not work its way through to cause a reduction in service delivered. You may be assured that we will use our utmost endeavours to achieve this.

Note 2 to Editors: A US power company, American Electric Power, bid £1.4 billion for Yorkshire Electricity in 1997. Southern Electric is the only independent regional electricity company out of the 12 which were privatised by the Conservative Government in 1990.

Other regional electricity companies that have been taken over by American companies include Northern, East Midlands, South Western, London, Seeboard and Midlands. Since 1990 there has been a takeover frenzy. Manweb was taken over by ScottishPower. Eastern went to Hanson. Norweb disappeared into the arms of North West Water for £1.8 billion. Swalec was taken over by Welsh Water.

Yorkshire electricity profits: *£ million*

1991/92	142
1992/93	156
1993/94	149
1994/95	217
1995/96	219
1996/97	-33
1997/98	150
1998/99	217

Profits on ordinary activities before taxation
Source: Annual Reports

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

For Immediate Release. No 16/00 Tuesday 18 January 2000

MP WALKS THE FOOD CHAIN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be "walking the food chain" this Thursday (20 January) when he visits Unigate Dairies in West London where 1 million gallons of milk are processed every week.

The MP has always taken a keen interest in food safety but this was heightened following an e coli outbreak in his own Pendle constituency in 1996. He will also be visiting Hanworth - the largest glass bottling processing site in Europe where 6.5 million glass bottles are produced every week.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I want to see what happens at each stage from the factory gate to the supermarket shelf. That's why I am walking the food chain with a number of Parliamentary colleagues."

"These days, food is a red hot political potato. People have the right to expect wholesome food and drink."

"And they should know, in detail, where the food they eat comes from. I want to see local sourcing wherever possible - and easy to read labelling that gives people the information they want."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 17/00 Tuesday 18 January 2000

MP URGES BLAIR TO UPRATE THE MINIMUM WAGE

The introduction of a National Minimum Wage at £3.60 an hour in April 1999 made a huge impact in Pendle says local MP, Gordon Prentice. But now he wants the Prime Minister to give an undertaking that it will be uprated annually. So far, the Government has not given a commitment to do this.

In his letter to the Prime Minister, the Pendle MP says the minimum wage is one of Labour's most popular policies but the goodwill the Government earned from its introduction will be dissipated if the £3.60 minimum is pegged. The MP told the PM

that over 8% of Pendle people in full time work and 27% in part time work benefited from the pay boost.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Poverty pay has blighted East Lancashire for years and the minimum wage - even set at the modest level of £3.60 - made an enormous difference to thousands of people. Since its introduction last April unemployment has continued to fall in Pendle."

Note to Editors: The MP's letter to the Prime Minister, dated 18 January, reads: Dear Tony, The introduction of the National Minimum Wage of £3.60 an hour in April 1999 had a huge impact in Pendle and across East Lancashire - an area which has for too long been blighted by low pay. The Government got a tremendous amount of credit for introducing the Minimum Wage but I fear all the goodwill could be squandered if we do not give an early commitment to uprate it annually. Some kind of index should be used to take the uprating out of party politics.

Here in Pendle, over 8% of Pendle people in full time work and 27% in part time work benefited from the pay boost. And yet its introduction has not been associated with any increase in unemployment. On the contrary, unemployment in Pendle has continued to fall. I believe the case for annual uprating is unanswerable."

more follows

MP URGES BLAIR TO UPRATE THE MINIMUM WAGE

Note 2 to Editors: The Government announced on 18 June 1998 that the National Minimum Wage will be introduced at a rate of £3.60 per hour, with effect from April 1999. A development rate would apply for 18-21 year olds.
There will also be a development rate of £3.20 available for six months for workers aged 22 years and over starting a new job with a new employer and receiving accredited training. 16-17 year olds would be exempt from the National Minimum Wage.

Some two million workers nationally will escape from poverty pay as a result of the minimum wage. These will include:

1.3 million women and 1.2 million part-time workers;
130,000 ethnic minority workers;
80,000 homeworkers;
200,000 young people;
200,000 lone parents.

Note 2 to Editors: % of employees in 1997 earning under £3; £3.50 and £4.00 per hour:

		£3	£3.50	£4.00
Pendle	Full Time	1.5%	8.1%	14%
	Part Time	11.1%	27.8%	30.6%
Lancashire				
	Full Time	1.6%	5.7%	11.00%
	Part Time	7.5%	23.2%	37.3%

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 18/00 Wednesday 19 January 2000

PENDLE MP HITS OUT AT TYSON DECISION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says he regrets the Home Secretary's decision to allow convicted rapist, Mike Tyson, into the country for a heavyweight boxing contest later this month. He has backed a Commons motion supported by 29 MPs regretting the admission of Tyson into the country.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said that had his decision gone the other way it would have been open to legal challenge because the immigration rule excluding people who have served a prison sentence longer than a year had been inconsistently applied over the years. In some cases, convicted murderers who have served their sentence have still been free to come and go. Straw has now ordered a review.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "It is as plain as a pikestaff that the immigration regime we inherited from the Conservatives was in a complete shambles. But it is absolutely appalling that Tyson is here in Britain."

Note to Editors: The Commons Early Day Motion which appeared in the Order Paper today reads: "

That this House regrets the admittance of Mike Tyson, a convicted rapist, into the United Kingdom; is concerned that his presence will signal that rape and violence towards women is less important than commercial gain; and calls upon the Government to ensure that in future the current law on admission of foreigners is upheld in all cases, there being no excuse now for any boxing promoter or anyone else to plead ignorance of the law."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

No 19/00 **EMBARGOED** until Thursday 20 January 2000

WEST CRAVEN HIGH SCHOOL WINS TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE STATUS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news that West Craven High School in Barnoldswick has been awarded the prized "Technology College" status. With the designation comes a Government cash grant of £100,000 for capital expenditure. There will also be extra recurrent funding per pupil to help the school deliver its curriculum and community plans.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP - who lives in the town - said he was thrilled to bits. "The school put a lot of time and energy into its bid for technology college status and it has been rewarded for its efforts."

In a letter to the MP today, Schools Minister, Estelle Morris, wrote: "As you know last October West Craven High School in your constituency made an application for Technology College status. I am very pleased to tell you the application has been approved by the Secretary of State and the school will begin operating as a Technology College from 1 September this year. I am sure you will agree that this is an excellent achievement by the School, and one of which all involved can rightly be proud."

"The Technology College Programme will ensure that pupils in designated TCS and those in nearby schools and the wider community benefit from the extended technological learning experiences they can provide. Technology Colleges will be committed to raising standards in teaching and learning, and strengthening awareness and ability in technology, science and mathematics."

"A feature of the Programme is the continuing Partnership

more follows

between schools and the business community, with private sector sponsors taking a close interest in the future direction of the school. In addition, we make a grant of £100,000 to each Technology College towards its capital expenditure. Each new Technology College will also receive recurrent funding on a per pupil basis to help deliver its enhanced curriculum and community plans."

"We seek to ensure that the benefits of the programme are spread as effectively as possible by specialist schools working closely in partnership with a range of partners including business and industry, and sharing their specialism and enhanced facilities with colleagues in other institutions, as well as their partner schools."

Gordon Prentice added: "This is great news. I have told the Headmaster, Arnold Kuchartschuk, I am delighted. This reflects well on him and his staff."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 20/00 Thursday 20 January 2000

PHOTOCALL: GORDON PRENTICE AT COLNE LEISURE CENTRE, 5.00PM SATURDAY 22 JANUARY 2000

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be cheering Nelson girl Steffanie Smith as she attempts to swim up to 12 lengths at Colne swimming pool this Saturday. Steffanie, who suffers from cerebral palsey and is confined to a wheelchair, is raising funds for the charity Headway and also the special care baby unit at Burnley General Hospital.

The MP said: "What a marvellous effort, I shall be cheering Steffanie on from the poolside and I know she will be putting everything into this swim."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 21/00 Thursday 20 January 2000

SLIGHT RISE IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,339 (1,317 in November) - an unemployment rate of 3.9%. There were 988 men and 351 women out of work. The corresponding figures in November were respectively 957 and 360.

Nationally, claimant unemployment is down by 147,000 over the last year and in December fell by a further 22,000 to 1,164,000. The numbers in work has again hit a

new high, the Office for National Statistics confirmed that the number stands at a record 27,520,000.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: “The unemployment rate in Pendle has been below 4% since since September 1999 and remains on a par with the national average of 4.0%. Vacancies at the job centres continue at a high level and more people than ever have a good chance of getting a job.”

The MP continued: “ In the last two and a half years the employment rate of those aged between 50 and state pension has risen by almost 2% I am encouraged by an increasing awareness among employers and companies such as B & Q and Granada who have made it clear that they are reaping the benefits of recruiting experienced and committed workers.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 22/00 Monday 24 January 2000

MP BACKS MOVE TO STRIP DUCHY OF LANCASTER OF MAGISTRACY ROLE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has told Cabinet Office Minister, Mo Mowlam, that she should no longer have responsibility for appointing lay magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. In a centuries old tradition, she does this wearing her other hat as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Minister is currently sounding out opinion on proposals to strip the Duchy of powers that go back to the 14th century.

There are some 30,000 JPs in England and Wales. The Lord Chancellor appoints just under 26,000, while the Chancellor of the Duchy appoints around 4,200.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The Duchy is a throwback to the medieval period and its practices are riddled with anomalies and curiosities. This is one of them. The appointment of lay people to the bench to dispense justice should not be in

the gift of the Duchy but should lie with the person responsible for the judiciary - the Lord Chancellor."

The Pendle MP has been a persistent critic of the Duchy and its practices - often cloaked in secrecy. Last May he said it was time for the flag to be lowered on the ancient title of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He asked Mo Mowlam's predecessor as Chancellor of the Duchy - Jack Cunningham - if he was "proud or slightly embarrassed to be the only Cabinet Minister with his own flag!" The MP described the Duchy as a "complete anachronism" and it was wrong for magistrates to be appointed by the Duchy.

Note to Editors: The history of the Duchy of Lancaster goes back to the 14th century. Since 1399 this estate passed to each reigning monarch with

more follows

the Duchy revenues providing a source of income separate from other Crown inheritances. This separate identity was preserved when in 1760 George III surrendered the revenue from the Crown Estates to the Government in exchange for the Civil List but retained the Duchy of Lancaster revenues. Justices of the Peace are appointed on behalf of the Queen by the Lord Chancellor, except in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire where appointments are made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Note 2 to Editor: In a letter to the Pendle MP, dated 20 January, the Minister wrote: "The Government is considering whether it would be preferable for magisterial appointments in the Duchy area to be made by the Lord Chancellor rather than me, since he appoints all other magistrates in England and Wales.

At present, I appoint magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside under the Justices of the Peace Act 1997. This reflects a long history - Chancellors of the Duchy have made these appointments since the 14th Century. 'The last time the issue was formally examined was by a Royal Commission who reported in 1948 that the existing system should continue as opinion in Lancashire favoured doing so. However, the issue for today is whether the current division of responsibilities for the appointment of the lay magistracy makes sense.

The Lord Chancellor has responsibility for the Magistrates' Courts Service throughout the whole of England and Wales and appoints all lay magistrates apart from those in the Duchy. To give some idea of the relative tasks, there are some 30,000 JPs in England and Wales. The Lord Chancellor appoints just under 26,000, while the Chancellor of the Duchy appoints around 4,200. In a given year, this translates to some 1,600 appointments made by the Lord Chancellor and 200 made by me.

In addition the Lord Chancellor appoints all Judges up to and including the High Court, and he advises the Prime Minister whom to recommend to Her Majesty for the higher appointments. He is therefore responsible for all the professional Judges who serve Lancashire, Greater Manchester or Merseyside direct. This ensures clear lines of accountability and consistency of approach across the whole of the appointment process, and places responsibility for advice on appointments to the judiciary in the office of the Lord Chancellor.

The Lord Chancellor is both accountable for the whole judiciary and duty bound to uphold and maintain its independence. In this context, with the Government committed to achieving improvements in the Criminal justice system and aligning organisational and other structures, the exclusion of the magistrates in the Duchy seems something of an anomaly.

Aside from the issue of principle, there is also the practical case that a unification of responsibilities would lead to benefits of efficiency and economy of scale, with all parts of the magistracy in England and Wales within the same framework."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 23/00 Monday 24 January 2000

MP RIDICULES PROPOSALS TO REFORM THE LORDS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has ridiculed proposals to reform the House of Lords where membership of the second chamber will depend, for the most part, on appointment rather than election.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The second chamber should be small in number - 100 would do - full time and elected. The Royal Commission on the Reform of the House of Lords which reported last week has come up with a fantastical solution worthy of an episode of Gormenghast!”

“An appointments commission is to be charged with the awesome responsibility of plucking individuals from every nook and cranny in a bid to ensure the second chamber is representative of the UK. It is an impossible task. And who appoints the appointments commission?”

“The recommendations are appallingly backward looking. We simply do not need a bloated Upper House of 550 people. And because the present incumbents are to be left in place until the Grim Reaper claims them, it could be years before we see any visible signs of change. The simplest answer is the one dismissed out of hand. The second chamber should be wholly elected.”

The MP has tabled a Commons motion which will appear in the Order Paper tomorrow “deeply regretting” the conclusions of the Royal Commission and calling for a wholly elected second chamber.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 24/00 Monday 24 January 2000

SPARKS SET TO FLY AS MP WELCOMES UTILITIES BILL

Plans to tighten up the regulation of the privatised utilities have been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice. The Utilities Bill, which will be debated in the Commons next Monday (31 January), will ensure that the nature of any link between directors' pay and service standards will be published, and - if there are no such links - that too will be published.

The MP said: “The utility companies have been getting away with blue murder. We need to shine a torch into dark corners.”

Last week, Yorkshire Electricity, which supplies about one third of Pendle, announced it was to cut its workforce by 350. The company blamed new price controls imposed by the electricity regulator, Ofgem. Last year, Yorkshire Electricity made £217m profit. Since 1990, the company has made £1,217m profit.

Notes to Editors: For many years questions have been asked about the privatised utilities and whether they have given consumers a good deal or not. Critics say prices are higher than they need to be and the system is biased towards shareholders rather than consumers. Individual regulators could and did make idiosyncratic decisions which left companies and their investors confused, and a situation where directors could end up getting vast amounts of money even though they were just in the right place at the right time. In addition the system that was set up, in terms of energy in particular, paid almost no attention to social issues - like fuel poverty.

The Bill puts the needs of consumers at the top both in terms of the regulator's principal objectives, and the functions of new powerful Consumer Councils. The Utilities Bill will reform the Trading Arrangements (the Pool) and should lead to further price cuts. Regulation is to be made more transparent and open to appeal. In energy and telecoms an individual regulator will be replaced by a regulatory authority.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 25/00 Tuesday 25 January 2000

PENDLE MP SLAMS QC WHO CLAIMS £500,000 EARNINGS FROM LEGAL AID ARE “DERISORY”

Barristers whose earnings come from Legal Aid work could see their fees linked to the going rate for other public sector workers such as doctors and nurses.

In the Commons this afternoon Lord Chancellor's Department Minister David Lock warned that barristers getting £500,000 a year could face a pay cut.

At question time, the Minister told Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice: "I must say that the Government considers that sums paid from taxpayers' funds to barristers may - and we are considering this at the moment - be related to the sums that we pay to other important public service workers such as teachers, doctors, nurses and social workers. I don't think there are many nurses - despite the generosity of Health Secretary Alan Milburn - who are collecting £500,000 a year."

The Pendle MP had drawn the Minister's attention to an article in the Times in which Richard Benson QC had urged barristers "to fight back" claiming their earnings were "derisory" after deduction of professional, administrative and travel expenses.

Speaking after the exchange, an unrepentant Gordon Prentice said: "I simply refuse to feel sorry for barristers."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 26/00 Thursday 27 January 2000

MP STEPS UP THE PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT TO UPRATE THE MINIMUM WAGE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today stepped up the pressure on the Government to uprate annually the national minimum wage which was introduced in April last year.

At Trade and Industry questions in the Commons this afternoon, the campaigning backbencher told Industry Secretary, Stephen Byres, that "the minimum wage has huge practical importance and, for the Labour Party and for the Labour Government, it has huge symbolic importance". He told MPs that 8% of all adults in full time work in Pendle benefited from the NMW and 30% of part time women workers.

The Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers said: "The national minimum wage and any increase will need to be considered in the light of the economic conditions at any particular time. I know this cautious approach will be criticised in some quarters but it is very important that this radical change in the labour market is introduced

successfully, which it has been, and we mustn't take any steps which will disadvantage it."

Speaking after the exchange the Pendle MP said: “£3.60p an hour is not a King’s Ransom. It needs to be uprated annually if it is not to wither on the vine.”

Note to Editors: Last week, the MP wrote to the PM, saying: “The Government got a tremendous amount of credit for introducing the NMW but I fear all the goodwill could be squandered if we do not give an early commitment to uprate it annually. Some kind of index should be used to take the uprating out of party politics.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 27/00 Tuesday 1 February 2000

NO SHORT TERM FIXES FOR FARMING

The Government believes there is a healthy future for farming but the answer is not another emergency aid package. This was the blunt message delivered by the Prime Minister to the NFU.

Earlier today the Prime Minister acknowledged to the NFU that there is a serious, deep crisis in the agriculture industry, worsened by falling food prices and the strong pound.

The Prime Minister outlined a new relationship between the industry and government: Farms need to diversify and farmers need to learn new skills. Subsidies must focus more on environmental responsibility rather than production - already being driven forward by the Rural Development plan. There must be a new focus on food quality in the marketplace.

The PM told farmers that British farming could be a world-class industry but it must get away from the cycle of short-term crises and short-term fixes.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, commenting on the speech said: “The era of huge taxpayer subsidies for agriculture has to end. In the long term, it is not good for farmers nor for the rest of us.”

“We need to forge a new relationship where public money gets spent on the things the public values. I want to see a big expansion of extensive and organic farming.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 28/00 Tuesday 1 February 2000

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PRESSES FOR NEW CONTROLS ON "AIR BOMB" FIREWORKS

Lancashire County Council's Chief Trading Standards Officer, Jim Potts, has told local MP, Gordon Prentice, that he wants to see new controls placed on the purchase of air bomb fireworks which, he says, have become the "nuisance firework".

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Every year around November, I get complaints about noisy fireworks that distress people and their household pets. But sometimes the damage done is not just to the ear drums. Last year 830 people were admitted to hospital; casualty departments with firework injuries. 29 of these were in Lancashire. We need to tighten things up."

Note to Editors: On 31 January, the Chief Trading Standards Officer at LCC told the MP: "In the past, the County Council has variously recommended to the Local Government Association that the registration of retailers and the sales period for fireworks needs tightening up with stronger licensing requirements and statutory maximum sales periods. We will also be recommending control on the sales of these "air bomb" fireworks which are now being sold cheaply, and since the banning of bangers, these have become the "nuisance" firework.

I believe these fireworks should only be sold as part of mixed, boxed sets of fireworks, which would remove them from the pocket money range of teenagers, Trading Standards are responsible for firework safety, storage and under 18 year old sales with the Police responsible for street nuisance, However, we do work closely together and Trading Standards has received over 30 complaints regarding this type of firework during the Bonfire Night sales period. I welcome your support in improving controls over fireworks, and if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 29/00 Tuesday 1 February 2000

Dr HAROLD SHIPMAN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon welcomed the inquiry, announced by Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, into the lessons to be learned from the Harold Shipman case.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: “Shipman is an evil man who betrayed the trust of his patients. He is, thank God, a one-off. No-one knows why he did what he did but he will have the rest of his life behind bars to come to terms with his dreadful crimes.”

“The inquiry is the right response. GPs should have their skills revalidated at intervals and there should be an external clinical audit of the professional competence of doctors. And we also need to look at and overhaul the procedures for certifying death.”

The MP added: “The new accountability and transparency that the Health Secretary wants to see will be welcomed by doctors and patients everywhere. The overwhelming majority of family doctors are hardworking and dedicated professionals who are as appalled as the rest of us at what Harold Shipman has done.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 30/00 Wednesday 2 February 2000

ASDA MP GETS ROASTING FROM PRENTICE

The appointment of Archie Norman, the Conservative MP who runs the supermarket giant, ASDA, to shadow John Prescott’s Environment Department has been slammed by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

In a Commons motion, the Pendle MP hits out at ASDA for dumping the Lancashire area as a supplier of vegetables to the supermarket chain, slashing at a stroke Lancashire farmers’ incomes by between 50% - 70%. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “ASDA has acted in a deplorably high handed manner.”

The Pendle MP also rounded on Michael Portillo, the new Shadow Chancellor, accusing him of "lacking judgement".

Note 1 to Editors: That this House deplores the decision of ASDA effectively to dump the Lancashire area as a supplier of vegetables, removing at a stroke 50 to 70 per cent of many Lancashire farmers' revenue; equally deplores the nature of the decision, made without warning or discussion with the farmers; and expresses its deep concern that this episode might well presage a more brutal and exploitative approach towards British farmers and growers introduced into the United Kingdom from the USA by Walmart.

Note 2 to Editors: As Local Government Minister Portillo was one of the keenest advocates of the inequitable poll tax which cost the taxpayer £14 billion to install and dismantle. As Chief Secretary to the Treasury he imposed VAT on fuel at 8 per cent and wanted to raise it to 17.5 per cent. He also introduced the largest tax demand in peacetime history to pay for Tory economic mismanagement. As Under-Secretary for Social Security he launched the personal and occupational pensions schemes in which thousands were encouraged to opt out of SERPS when it was not in their interest. Now his economic illiteracy is back in evidence again as he struggles with the Tories' nonsense Tax Guarantee that would mean cuts to schools and hospitals.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 31/00 Thursady 3 February 2000

MP CALLS FOR SAMARITANS HELP-LINE AT ALL RAILWAY STATIONS

Half of all the fatalities on Britain's railways are suicides according to shock statistics given to Pendle's MP, Gordon Prentice. Transport Minister Keith Hill told the MP that in 1998/9, no fewer than 123 people committed suicide by throwing themselves in front of trains.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Railtrack and the train operating companies can only do so much.

For tbe period 1 April 1995 - 31 March 1999, the number of people killed by trains was:

Year	Total Fatalities	Suicides
1995/96	249	131
1996/97	249	119
1997/98	278	147
1998/99	254	123

The figures include all fatalities due to train accidents and the movement of trains reported to the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE's) HM Railway Inspectorate. Tlie figures for suicides are included in tbe total fatalities figures. The total figures also iiiolude fatalities to trespassers which have averaged well over 100 a year. The figures in this table are b@ised on published statistics, subject to subsequent change by Coroners verdicts.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 32/00 Monday 7 February 2000

COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

A new report into the organisation of Lancashire's social services has identified weaknesses in the management and delivery of important services to the community.

The report - put together by the local finance watchdog, the Audit Commission, and the Social Services Inspectorate - will make uncomfortable reading for councillors considering the implications of the report when they meet today (Monday) at County Hall in Preston.

In a letter to the Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, Health Minister, John Hutton, says: "The joint review identifies a wide range of issues that result in services being offered inequitably, resources used inefficiently and poor relationships with other providers. The combination of these issues adds up to a very significant challenge for the authority and will require a change of culture for councillors, senior, middle and first line managers, assessing staff and those providing services."

The Minister has told the Chief Inspector of Social Services, Denise Platt, to meet the Leader of the County Council, John West and Chair of the Social Services Committee, Doreen Pollitt, to see what changes are to be made to address the issues identified by the report. The meeting is scheduled for 15 February.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I know the Council is already addressing the issues raised by the report and is producing an action plan. The County appreciates the need to explain to the public the improvements it will be making. I have spoken to the Chair of Social Services about the report and I am confident Lancashire will do what is needed."

more follows

COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES PUT UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Note to Editors: The letter, dated 7 February, from Health Minister, John Hutton. to the Pendle MP reads as follows:

LANCASHIRE SOCIAL SERVICES JOINT REVIEW REPORT

You will be receiving a report of a Social Services inspectorate/Audit Commission joint)t review of Lancashire Social Services. This will be published when it is presented to the Social Services Committee in Lancashire on Monday 7 February.

The report raises some significant issues about the way that social services are organised in Lancashire. I am therefore writing to inform you of some key concerns about services in Lancashire and the action I propose to take.

The joint review identifies a wide range of issues that result in services being offered inequitably, resources used inefficiently and poor relationships with other providers. The combination of these issues adds up to a very significant challenge for the authority and will require a change of culture for councillors, senior, middle and first line managers, assessing staff and those providing services.

The joint review has identified five major areas for improvement, which I understand mirror areas that have been identified in the authority as requiring urgent attention. They need to take action on the following strategic issues:

- arrangements for assessment and care management for adult service users;
- commissioning strategies for all user groups to make best use of the resources available in all sectors;
- systems of performance management to assure the quality and equity of all services;
- improved management accountability so that the decision making processes are clearly understood by those both inside and outside the authority;
- a more open and focused approach to partnership working with other agencies in all sectors

Because of the scale of the changes required and the need for action at political, corporate and social services management levels I have asked the Chief Inspector, Denise Platt, to meet with the Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Social Services Committee and the Director of Social Services. She will clarify whether they understand the full implications of the strategic changes that are required and have appropriate arrangements in place to address them. This meeting will take place on 15 February, Denise Platt will then advise me about whether I need to take any further action. I will let you know what I decide.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 33/00 Wednesday 9 February 2000

MP QUESTIONS AMPUTATIONS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, was shocked to read disturbing reports that a surgeon has amputated the healthy limbs of two psychologically disturbed men. The MP, who takes a close interest in health matters, has taken the matter up with Health Minister John Hutton.

The Minister told the Pendle MP: “No discussions have taken place with the British Medical Association concerning the ethics of amputating healthy limbs as a way of assessing a mental health problem. Doctors’ decisions about treatment and care for a patient are based on a thorough assessment of the individual’s condition, taking account of the patient’s needs and wishes, the evidence base for the effectiveness of treatment, and the resources available.”

The MP said: “As a lay person I had no idea that these operations were taking place and I was even more shocked to find out from the Health Minister that there have been no discussions with the BMA concerning the ethics of amputating healthy limbs as a way of addressing a mental health problem.”

The MP continued; “The whole thing seems incredible to me. There is something chilling about the amputation of healthy limbs. Surely there should be guidelines on this and I have written to the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Milburn, to urge him to begin discussions with the BMA.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 34/00 Wednesday 9 February 2000

ROLLS ROYCE STRATEGY SCRUTINISED AS MP MEETS UNION OFFICIALS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet shop stewards from Rolls Royce in Westminster next Wednesday 16 February for round table talks on where the company is going. Representatives from Rolls Royce in Barnoldswick and from all over the country will be discussing changes in work patterns that RR are currently implementing.

The MP said: “I had a two hour long meeting with Rolls Royce back in June 1999. I know the company is committed to delivering double digit earnings growth to its shareholders but, at the same time, it mustn’t neglect the people who work for it.”

The MP continued, “Just last week there were reports in the local papers that changes in shift patterns at the plant in Barnoldswick could mean a number of workers losing out in their pay packets.
It has been generally accepted that the company is trying to prevent further job losses but these changes are on top of the 100 job cuts announced just before Christmas.”

The MP concluded: “We’ve got a world class company in Rolls Royce but it shouldn’t forget the people who made it into what it is.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 35/00 Wednesday 9 February 2000

EDGE END’s WESTMINSTER EXPERIENCE
Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP at Edge End High School, Hibson Road, Nelson on Friday 11 February 2000 at 11.00am

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be once again visiting Edge End High School to listen to Year 8 students as they create their own version of a debate in the House of Commons. This activity is part of the Motorola Youth Parliament Competition and the subject this year is the building of a 2nd Channel Tunnel. The school is looking to the MP to give them advice and hints on how their debate compares to the real thing at Westminster and they will then make a video of the session to send in as their competition entry.

The MP said: “I was thoroughly impressed with last year’s debate on the Euro and I was able to give some general advice on parliamentary procedure. I am very much looking forward to going along again as I am in no doubt that the standard will be as good, if not better, than before. I’m sure to pick up some interesting views that I can take back to my colleagues at Westminster!”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 36/00 Wednesday 9 February 2000

TOP AWARD FOR PENDLE LABOUR COUNCILLORS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is thrilled with the news that Pendle Labour group has won a Labour party award for the best campaigning group in opposition. They beat stiff competition from Labour councils from all over the country.

As if this wasn't enough the group also won an overall prize for the 'Best Practice' award. Local Councillors Azhar Ali and Colin Waite were at the Local Government Conference in Blackpool at the weekend to receive the award from the Prime Minister.

Gordon Prentice said: "I am absolutely delighted. The Labour group has run a number of splendid campaigns. Their energy and enthusiasm have been rewarded."

He continued: "Their CCTV campaign was especially successful with the recent news that the government will be making a grant of £200,000 towards funding cameras for Nelson Town Centre."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 37/00 Thursday 10 February 2000

LIFE PEERS PAST THEIR SELL BY DATE says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, courted controversy this afternoon by telling the Commons that proposals to reform the House of Lords could leave life peers in Parliament "long into the 21st century". The MP wants the life peers thrown out and replaced by a wholly elected Upper House of no more than 100 members.

Pointing to a Commons motion in today's Order Paper, the MP reminded the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, that the Wakeham Report on reforming the Lords allowed existing life peers to remain in the Upper House should they so wish.

The MP told the House: "According to my calculations half the life peers will be dead within 11 years; three quarters will be dead within 20 years and 90% will be dead in 29 years. But 10% will still be alive and kicking well into the 21st century."

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "The Wakeham report is a dog's breakfast. I want to see the simplicity and clarity of election. People are fed up with patronage and preferment where everything is stitched up."

Note to Editors: The motion reads: "This House notes the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Reform of the House of Lords which allows for existing peers to remain in the Upper House if they so wish; further notes that the average age of male life peers is around 70 years compared with 64 years for women; calculates that the expected number of life peers dying within 11 years is around 49 per cent. of the 543 life peers (out of 550) whose dates of birth are readily available; postulates that it would be around 20 years before this expected number reached three quarters of existing life peers and 29 years before this figure reached 90 per cent; considers it inappropriate for appointed peers to serve in Parliament long into the 21st century; recognises that appointment is no substitute for election; and calls for a wholly elected Upper House of 100 members."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 38/00 Wednesday 9 February 2000

BOOST TO POLICE NUMBERS IN LANCASHIRE

Lancashire is on course to get an extra 126 police officers for front line work over the course of the next three years. This is Lancashire's share of the 5,000 extra police earmarked for England and Wales.

The announcement today by Home Secretary, Jack Straw, follows a bid from Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, for recruits under the Crime Fighting Fund. The details were set out in a letter to the Pendle MP from Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke.

All 43 police forces bid for a share of the fund. They asked for a total of 8,220 officers over the three years of the scheme.

Lancashire will get 25 officers in year 1; 51 in year 2 and 50 in year 3 although years 2 and 3 are provisional at this stage and depend on the force meeting their side of the deal with the Home Office. Funding for year one of the scheme will be £812,500 based

on the aggregate annual cost of a new police constable up to a maximum of £32,500. This includes £7,000 per recruit for training.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "This is excellent news. We all want to see more police officers on the beat."

Note to Editors: The letter, dated 8 February, to the Pendle MP from Home Office Minister Charles Clarke reads: "As you know, all 43 forces in England and Wales have bid for a share of the Crime Fighting Fund to recruit 5,000 police officers over and above the number they had otherwise planned to recruit over the next three years commencing in April 2000.

The number of officers bid for comes to a total of 8,220. As all forces meet the gateway criteria set out in the Bidding Guidelines, the Home Secretary has, in allocating funding for the 5,000 officers between forces, taken into
account the information which they provided in support of their bids.

more follows:

BOOST TO POLICE NUMBERS IN LANCASHIRE

... The attached letter to the chief officer sets out the number of officers which have been allocated to the force in each of the three years of the scheme. The numbers for years two and three are provisional at this stage. They are dependent on the force meeting the continuation criteria for benefiting from the Fund. The Home Secretary will be announcing the results of all the bids on Wednesday 9 February.

You may be interested to know that forces tell us that, without the additional resources from the Fund, they are planning to recruit a total of 12,478 police officers (new recruits to the service) in the three years commencing in April 2000. Their estimates reflect the decisions they and their police authorities have had to make about the way in which they will use the resources available to them not just next year but in the two following years where budgets have yet to be settled. The money from the Crime Fighting Fund will be used to recruit 5,000 officers over and above the number forces plan to recruit over the three year period.

Although there are marked variations between forces, police numbers overall have fallen in England and Wales since 1993. Our hope is that with this new money, they will now begin to rise. These figures for officer numbers however, need to be seen against a significant rise in the number of civilian staff employed in the police service - many on Operational duties or duties previously undertaken by police officers. Figures being published this Wednesday show that the number of civilian staff in the police service is at an all time high.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 39/00 Wednesday 9 February 2000

MP SAYS POLICE REFORMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND MUST GO ON EVEN AS ASSEMBLY SUSPENDED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged the Government to press ahead with reforms to the police service in Northern Ireland even though the fledgling Northern Ireland Assembly is to be suspended.

Speaking in the Commons this afternoon, the MP told Northern Ireland Minister, Adam Ingram: "Is it not the case that a situation in which 92% of police officers in Northern Ireland are Protestant and 8% are Catholic is not sustainable in the long term. We need to implement the Patten recommendations."

The Minister said the Government intended to proceed with the Patten recommendations drawn up by the former Conservative MP and Governor of Hong Kong. He is now a European Commissioner.

Chris Patten recommended a major restructuring of the RUC including a name change and a drive to increase the number of police officers who are Catholic.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 40/00 Tuesday 15 February 2000

MP BACKS NEW MOVE TO CUT CRIME

The Government's drive to crack down on criminals has been given added impetus this week with the publication of proposed targets to reduce crime. All police authorities are being asked to set specific targets for domestic burglary and for vehicle crime for the five year period beginning 1 April 2000.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "I welcome this announcement from the Home Office. There isn't a person in the land that wants their house or car to be broken into. The targets will go some way to reassuring the public that the police are serious in reducing these crimes however small."

The proposed five year crime reduction targets for Lancashire are:

- 30% cut in vehicle crime recorded in April 98 - March 99
- 34% cut in house burglaries recorded in April 98 - March 99

In North Yorkshire the figures are:

- 25% cut in vehicle crime recorded in April 98 - March 99
- 44% cut in house burglaries recorded in April 98 - March 99

The MP said: “The Government is committed to making major inroads into levels of crime but it is also aware that targets are not the only way to reduce criminal activity. All elements of the community from employers to voluntary organisations and local councils have their part to play in ensuring the public are protected. Here in Pendle, Brierfield already has CCTV cameras and Nelson will soon have cameras installed. These are the sort of initiatives the Government welcomes.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 41/00 Tuesday 15 February 2000

MP WELCOMES PLANNED INCREASE IN NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

Campaigning MP, Gordon Prentice, was in buoyant mood today over news the Government is to raise the National Minimum Wage from October 2000 to £3.70p per hour. The young person’s rate is to go up from £3.00 to £3.20.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: “This is good news but we need a mechanism for uprating the NMW annually so we don’t need to go through this performance every twelve months. I want to see the NMW taken out of party politics.”

“The minimum wage is a flagship policy of the Labour Government and it is crucially important to East Lancashire. We simply can’t let it lose its value over time.”

The MP is to raise the issue of annual uprating at a meeting tomorrow of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

On the introduction of the NMW last April, 8% of working adults in Pendle received a pay increase and 30% of part time working women.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 41/00 Wednesday 16 February 2000

ORGANS WANTED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is answering the call from the NHS to become an organ donor and has registered his name on a computerised national list.

The MP said: “Like a lot of people, this is something I have thought about doing for many years and not got round to. The widening gap between numbers on the waiting list and organs available for transplant has been the spur for me to put my name forward.”

In the United Kingdom organs from 900 donors give a new lease of life to more than 3,000 people every year and a further 3,000 have their sight restored. However, at the end of January there were 6,668 people on the waiting list for transplantation.

The MP said: “Although many people already carry donor cards or are on the NHS Organ Donor Register, more are needed. The huge success of heart, liver and kidney transplants mean they are now commonplace. I have filled in my Organ Donor registration form and I encourage everybody to think about doing the same.”

The most successful transplants come from organs donated from within the recipient’s own ethinic group because of the importance of matching tissues in organ donation. There is no maximum age for some donations and having an existing medical condition does not necessarily prevent a person from becoming a donor.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 44/00 Thursday 17 February 2000

MP TELLS COMMONS OF WEST CRAVEN HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Commons at Education questions this afternoon of his delight that West Craven High School in Barnoldswick had been awarded technology college status.

With the designation comes a Government cash grant of £100,000 for capital expenditure. There will also be extra recurrent funding per pupil to help the school deliver its curriculum and community plans.

The MP went on to quiz Education Minister, Jacqui Smith, on the proportion of secondary schools expected to have specialist school status by May 2002. The Minister said 19% would be specialist. At present, there are nearly 500 specialist schools nationwide.

The Pendle MP said the Government was creating a complex matrix of technology, arts and sports and language colleges and there was a real danger that the majority of schools - the non specialist schools delivering the national curriculum - could see themselves branded as failures.

Speaking after the Commons exchange, the MP said: "I am thrilled to bits about West Craven. But why can't we have every school a specialist school - with good teachers and resources to match?"

Note to Editors: Last month the Education Secretary confirmed the school would begin operating as a Technology College from 1 September this year. In a letter to the MP the Schools Minister wrote:

"The Technology College Programme will ensure that pupils in designated TCS and those in nearby schools and the wider community benefit from the extended technological learning experiences they can provide.

more follows

Technology Colleges will be committed to raising standards in teaching and learning, and strengthening awareness and ability in technology, science and mathematics."

"A feature of the Programme is the continuing Partnership between schools and the business community, with private sector sponsors taking a close interest in the future direction of the school. In addition, we make a grant of £100,000 to each Technology College towards its capital expenditure. Each new Technology College will also receive recurrent funding on a per pupil basis to help deliver its enhanced curriculum and community plans."

"We seek to ensure that the benefits of the programme are spread as effectively as possible by specialist schools working closely in partnership with a range of partners including business and industry, and sharing their specialism and enhanced facilities with colleagues in other institutions, as well as their partner schools."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 45/00 Wednesday 23 February 2000

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,491 (1,339 in December) - an unemployment rate of 4.3%. There were 1107 men and 384 women out of work. The corresponding figures in November were respectively 988 and 351.

Nationally, claimant unemployment is down by 81,000 over the last year and in January fell by a further 9,800 to 1,158,000. The numbers in work has again hit a new high, the Office for National Statistics confirmed that the number stands at a record 27,580,000.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: "Unemployment in the country is now at its lowest level since the early 1980's. The booming service sector of the economy has soaked up jobs that are still being lost in the manufacturing industry."

The MP continued: "Although there is some concern about the increase in the rate of wage settlements there have been special factors that contributed to the rate. Christmas bonuses, high levels of temporary work and also millennium bonuses and high rates of millennium pay have all affected this set of figures."

Note to Editor: Average earnings grew by 5.5% in the year to December, a rise of 0.6% on the previous month and the biggest increase for almost 8 years. The rate was 5.8% in private firms, compared with 3.95 in the public sector.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 46/00 Wednesday 23 February 2000

NEW HELP FOR DIABETICS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news that diabetics who use pen needles and re-usable insulin pens will be available to get them on prescription for the first time. Health Minister Lord Philip Hunt announced that from 1 March insulin pen needles will be prescribed by GPs.

The MP said: "This is good news for people with diabetes. Many of them have to give themselves insulin injections every day of their lives. The pens are easier and more convenient to use than syringes and the needles which fit them are smaller and more comfortable. Previously people with diabetes were able to get insulin and syringes free on prescription, but those who use a pen injector had to buy the needles."

The MP continued: "Having diabetes is difficult enough and sufferers deserve top quality standards of care and treatment. We should do as much as we can to enable the comfort and convenience of the injections."

The announcement by the Government widens the choice for people with diabetes. Those who wish to continue using syringes will of course be able to do so, but pens will now be available without people having to buy the needles themselves."

Note to Editor: Insulin pens are devices for injecting insulin. They are more convenient and easier to use than syringes because they can be used one-handed, they can obtain two or three days' supply of insulin and the dose is simply selected on a dial. Their needles are smaller than those of syringes and therefore the pens are also more comfortable

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 46/00 Tuesday 22 February 1999

MP TAKES SWIPE AT LORD IRVINE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Commons this afternoon that the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, should no longer sit on the bench as a judge.

The MP said that Irvine - made famous by the controversy over the wallpapering of his official residence in the House of Lords - had three roles - as a Minister, legislator and judge - and this was “not sustainable”. He also took a swipe at the Royal Commission report on the reform of the House of Lords, saying he was saddened it recommended the status quo.

The Minister, Jane Kennedy, told the MP that Lord Irvine had sat as Lord Chancellor on four occasions as a judge, drawing the retort from the Pendle MP that this was “four times too many”.

Speaking after the exchange, the MP said: “The role of the Lord Chancellor is a strange anomaly. It is quite wrong for a member of the Government, and the Cabinet no less, to serve as a judge. We need to separate the roles.

The MP has earlier told the Minister that change could be forced on the UK Government by the European Court of Human Rights which is currently hearing a case brought by a resident of Guernsey which turns on this issue of separation of powers of the executive and the legislature.

The MP added: “The Human Rights Act is designed to protect the individual against the oppressive use of powers by the State. But what happens if the judge hearing the case is also a member of the Government? Change is going to come. I am sure of it.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 47/00 Wednesday 23 February 2000

MP WANTS TO DELIVER ON POST OFFICES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is looking to reassure local sub-postmasters and mistresses that he is going to do everything he can to protect the 18,000 strong Post Office network. Many people who run local post offices to tell the MP their worries.

The MP said: "The Government wants benefits and pensions to be made by automated credit transfer but not before 2003. And anyone who still wants to draw their benefits in cash from their local Post Office after then will still be able to do so. However, the Post Office estimates that sub-post offices could potentially lose 40% of their income if lots of people stop coming through the door so clearly this is a big issue that needs to be addressed."

The MP is pressing the Government to help the sub-post offices to survive despite the fact that they have been closing at an alarming rate for years.

The MP continued: "Since 1990 756 have closed but in the 1980's there were some really bad years. In 1984-85 an astonishing 389 shut up shop for good. And if that's not bad enough, for years now banks have also been closing branches in towns and rural areas. I want to see sub-post offices fill the banking gap. The Post Office is in the process of installing 3,000 hole-in-the-wall machines across the country but there are 18,000 Post Offices."

Last week the MP asked the DTI Minister, Alan Johnson, how many of the Automated Telling Machines (or ATM's) earmarked for post offices have been installed and where they are. The Minster told the MP: " The first of the ATMs under the new partnerships will be installed during the summer. The sites are still being agreed but they will be located at post offices across the whole of the UK, in both rural and urban areas."

more follows.....

MP WANTS TO DELIVER ON POST OFFICES

Gordon Prentice concluded: "The criteria for choosing the sites for ATMs is being kept under covers and I simply don't know why. I will be pressing the Government to be more open as there is the danger that the machines will go to the bigger post offices and not the small ones in rural areas.

Note 1 to Editor: The Government published the Postal Services Bill on 28 January 2000 and it provides for:

•Conversion of The Post Office to Plc status with the introduction of an arm's-length relationship with the Government

•The freedom to borrow up to £75 million at commercial rates in each of the next five years to fund growth.

• A universal service obligation enshrined in law - to provide every address in the United Kingdom with an affordable mail collection and delivery service supported by a nationwide network of post offices.
• The creation of a new independent regulator - the Postal Services Commission
• The replacement of the existing Post Office Users' National Council by a Consumer Council for Postal Services.

Note 2 to Editor. The number of sub-post offices in 1978-79 was 21,213 compared to 18,175 in 1998-99. Since 1990-91 there have been a total of 756 sub-post offices closed. 389 closed in 1984-85 the highest in any single year.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 47/00 Tuesday 22 February 1999

PENDLE MP POUNDS THE PRIVY COUNCIL

Decisions on new coinage are taken not by Parliament but in secret, by the Privy Council acting under prerogative powers according to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

"Astonishingly, the shape, look and feel of the pound in your pocket is not decided by Parliament."

The MP told the Commons this afternoon during questions to the President of the Council, Margaret Beckett, that some decisions (or Orders in Council) do not need to be placed before Parliament. Their authority is derived from the Crown and are exercised in the Queen's name. He told MPs it was time to modernise this aspect of Britain's ancient constitution.

Privy Council Minister, Paddy Tipping, told the Pendle MP that there were no plans to change current arrangements "although the privy council was planning to launch its own web site".

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “The Privy Council is part of the shadow State which operates outside the glare of publicity. It does things which should properly be done by Parliament. It has wide executive powers including the approval of rules of the statutory councils regulating the medical and certain other professions. It appoints to the governing bodies of universities and other organisations. It appoints HM School Inspectors.”

“In fact, it is quite a busy little body.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 48/00 Wednesday 23 February 2000

MP WANTS TO DELIVER ON POST OFFICES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is looking to reassure local sub-postmasters and mistresses that he is going to do everything he can to protect the 18,000 strong Post Office network. Many people who run local post offices to tell the MP their worries.

The MP said: “The Government wants benefits and pensions to be made by automated credit transfer but not before 2003. And anyone who still wants to draw their benefits in cash from their local Post Office after then will still be able to do so. However, the Post Office estimates that sub-post offices could potentially lose 40% of their income if lots of people stop coming through the door so clearly this is a big issue that needs to be addressed.”

The MP is pressing the Government to help the sub-post offices to survive despite the fact that they have been closing at an alarming rate for years.

The MP continued: “Since 1990 756 have closed but in the 1980’s there were some really bad years. In 1984-85 an astonishing 389 shut up shop for good. And if that’s not bad enough, for years now banks have also been closing branches in towns and rural areas. I want to see sub-post offices fill the banking gap. The Post Office is in the process of installing 3,000 hole-in-the-wall machines across the country but there are 18,000 Post Offices.”

Last week the MP asked the DTI Minister, Alan Johnson, how many of the Automated Telling Machines (or ATM’s) earmarked for post offices have been installed and where they are. The Minster told the MP: “The first of the ATMs under the new partnerships will be installed during the summer. The sites are still being

agreed but they will be located at post offices across the whole of the UK, in both rural and urban areas."

more follows.....

MP WANTS TO DELIVER ON POST OFFICES

Gordon Prentice concluded: "The criteria for choosing the sites for ATMs is being kept under covers and I simply don't know why. I will be pressing the Government to be more open as there is the danger that the machines will go to the bigger post offices and not the small ones in rural areas."

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Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 49/00 Wednesday 23 February 2000

NEW HELP FOR DIABETICS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news that diabetics who use pen needles and re-usable insulin pens will be available to get them on prescription for the first time. Health Minister, Lord Hunt, announced that from 1 March insulin pen needles will be prescribed by GPs.

The MP said: “This is good news for people with diabetes. Many of them have to give themselves insulin injections every day of their lives. The pens are easier and more convenient to use than syringes and the needles which fit them are smaller and more comfortable. Previously people with diabetes were able to get insulin and syringes free on prescription, but those who use a pen injector had to buy the needles.”

The MP continued: “Having diabetes is difficult enough and sufferers deserve top quality standards of care and treatment. We should do as much as we can to make the injections as straightforward and convenience as possible.”

The Governments announcement widens the choice for people with diabetes. Those who wish to continue using syringes will of course be able to do so, but pens will now be available without people having to buy the needles themselves.”

Note to Editor: Insulin pens are devices for injecting insulin. They are more convenient and easier to use than syringes because they can be used one-handed, they can obtain two or three days’ supply of insulin and the dose is simply selected on a dial. Their needles are smaller than those of syringes and therefore the pens are also more comfortable

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 50/00 Tuesday 22 February 2000

MP VOWS TO KEEP BATTLING FOR PoWs

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says he will be battling to get compensation for Far East Prisoners of War - despite the fact that the Government has refused to budge.

The MP was speaking at Westminster following a letter from Defence Minister, Dr Lewis Moonie, who said the Government was sticking to its long standing policy which was no to make an ex gratia payment to ex PoWs.

The Pendle MP said: "The latest news is disappointing but not unexpected. The Canadian Government made an ex gratia payment of £10,000 to its ex servicemen who were Far East PoWs. If we did the same here, it would cost about £100m. It's not a lot when you consider the debt we owe these ex servicemen and women. I am not going to let the matter drop."

The MP wrote to the Prime Minister last December following a meeting with the British Legions Lancashire Field Officer, Bob Ellis, at Westminster. At the time, the MP said: 'Up to now the PoWs have only received a maximum of £76 in compensation and Bob Ellis has told me that the Canadian Government has recently decided to make an ex-gratia payment of the equivalent of £10,000 to its FE PoWs. Surely it is high time for the British Government to follow their lead and ensure proper compensation for surviving former FE PoWs or their widows.'

Note to Editors: Defence Minister, Dr Lewis Moonie MP wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: Thank you for your letter of 24 January to Geoff Hoon on the question of an ex-gratia payment for former Far Eastern Prisoners of War and the number of such individuals who might be eligible for such a payment. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility.

more follows

MP VOWS TO KEEP BATTLING FOR PoWs

We are aware that some estimates in the region of 10,639 have been made by The Royal British Legion in conjunction with the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association whose records apparently include almost all the National Federation of Far Eastern Prisoner of War Clubs Associations.

However as you know, we have considered this matter most carefully and there are no plans to alter the long-standing policy not to adopt financial compensation arrangements of the kind suggested by the Legion.

Note to editor: The letter from the Pendle MP to the PM reads: As you will know the Royal British Legion held its annual Parliamentary Open Day at Westminster yesterday (14 December) and it is clear to me that the Legion feels very strongly indeed that the British Government should follow the example of the Canadians in paying a special grant to former British Far East PoWs. The Legion tells me that the FE PoWs have only ever received a maximum of £76 in compensation and that the British Government of 1955 deliberately avoided pressing for further compensation under the terms of the 1951 Peace Treaty when it was open to do so. With this in mind and in light of the recent decision by the Canadian Government to make an ex-gratia payment of the equivalent of £10,000 to its FE PoWs the Legion tell me that they approached you for a meeting in October but unfortunately your diary couldn't accommodate them at that time. I hope that you will seriously consider the Legion's request for a Special Gratuity to be paid as I know that it has wide support, not only from the public, but also in the Commons.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 51/00 Monday 28 February 2000

MP WANTS ACTION TO PROTECT RURAL CHURCHES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, called for action today against thieves who strip churches in Lancashire and Yorkshire of their precious artefacts and “disappear down the M1 to London”.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP told Church Commissioner, Stuart Bell, that special police officers should be designated to track down stolen stone artefacts stripped from ancient churches. The MP told the House that ancient stone tiles had been stripped from the roof of Ghyll Church at Barnoldswick and the medieval stones had never been recovered. MPs laughed as he told them the stones had "probably" ended up in a garden in Islington - where Tony Blair used to have his home.

The MP also wanted the equalising of church insurance premiums so parishes in more vulnerable places did not have to pay more than others. The MP told MPs: "People in my constituency are absolutely fed up to the back teeth with historic artefacts being stripped from churches. Not long ago the entire stone tiling from the medieval parish church of Ghyll was stripped, disappeared down the M1 and probably is in a garden in Islington as I speak. I want you to speak to the Home Secretary about this and perhaps designate police officers responsible for stolen stones."

Note to Editors: Stuart Bell said that the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group paid out on more than 4,000 claims in 1998 after church attacks including theft, vandalism and arson. "Ten churches are attacked every day and one-in-four can expect to be the victim of some kind of crime every year. As insurers they view this high level of crime to be completely unacceptable ... and work with the church wherever possible to help combat the rise in attacks on its people and property." A new system of marking church property and artefacts to aid recovery after thefts was now available.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 53/00 Monday 28 February 2000

MP URGES GOVERNMENT TO BRING IN FREE TV LICENCES FOR ALL PENSIONERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged Culture and Media Secretary, Chris Smith, to give all pensioners free TV licences.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP congratulated the Minister on the introduction - from November this year - of free TV licences for the over 75s. The MP said: “6,500 of my constituents will be celebrating the introduction of this hugely popular policy.
However, a number of pensioners have said to me, "Is this not just age discrimination?" I replied, "You will be 75 one day." Nevertheless, why should such a hugely popular policy involve a cut-off at 75? Why should it not apply to all pensioner households?”

Chris Smith replied: “My hon. Friend should address part of his question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, it should be pointed out that as pensioners reach a more advanced age they tend to become less mobile, to spend more time at home and, indeed, to spend more time watching television. At that point--the point at which they reach the age of 75--television becomes more important in their lives, which is why we thought it appropriate to take this step.”

Note to Editors: If the television licence of anyone who will be 75 or over on 1 November falls due after 1 April, they will be able to apply for a part-year licence up to 1 November so they do not have to purchase the entire year's licence. If anyone has already purchased a full year's licence, some of which will be unexpired on 1 November, they will be entitled to a refund. The Government will ensure that all the details of the scheme are made available directly to everyone who will qualify.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 54/00 Tuesday 7 March 2000

LOTTERY MONEY IS THERE FOR THE ASKING says MP

Voluntary groups in Pendle have been missing out on lottery money which could breathe fresh life into the vital work they do for the community says local MP, Gordon Prentice. He say he wants groups to apply for the grants that are going begging.

The MP was speaking at Westminster after receiving an approach from the National Lottery Charities Board who told him Pendle was getting less than its fair share of lottery grants. The Regional Manager, Andy Freeney, told him the Board would be launching a new programme in April which will run for two months to publicise the help that is available. The grants will be earmarked for the voluntary sector.

The MP said: "If local voluntary groups have a good idea and can put the cash to good use then they should apply. Pronto!"

Note to Editors: The Regional Manager North West of the National Lottery Charities Board, Andy Freeney, wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: "You may remember receiving a copy of the NLCB's Strategy last year. In it, the National Lottery Charities Board laid down its plans for the UK but it also contained items specific to the North West- one of these was the plan to achieve Geographical Equity in our grant making.

"From our review of Grants to-date, Pendle does not seem to be doing very well. Because of this we have had a series of meetings with the Local Authority and Voluntary Sector to plan a Community based Campaign which aims to help small groups apply for funding from us and hopefully contribute to the overall development of the Voluntary Sector in Pendle. The programme will start in April and will run for two months by the end of which we hope to have encouraged many groups to apply.

"I would very much appreciate your support for this project by encouraging groups to attend sessions...This is a pilot project which we are working very hard to make a success and then replicate it in other areas.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 55/00 Tuesday 29 February 2000

MP CALLS ON TORIES TO COME CLEAN ON THREATS TO NHS CARE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on the Conservative Party to come clean about their plans for the NHS. The demand follows worrying comments by some Tory MPs on health service privatisation.

Liam Fox, the Conservative MP for Woodspring and Opposition Health spokesman told the Sunday Times (16.1.2000) that conditions such as 'hip and knee replacements, hernia and cataract operations' should be covered by private medical insurance.

Gordon Prentice said: "This is a shameful thing to say. There were nearly 4,000 of these operations in East Lancashire during 1998/99. And many of these operations are

needed by elderly people. But pensioners are the least likely to obtain affordable private medical insurance."

Earlier in the year Phillip Hammond, Conservative MP for Runnymede and Weybridge told Sky News (31.01.2000) that under Conservative plans, people would look to the NHS 'when they had serious life-threatening conditions and would look to their private insurance to help them' with the rest.

The Pendle MP said: "This is staggering. Thousands of people will be worried sick if the Tories got a chance to put their plans for the NHS into practice. A lot of my constituents in Pendle just cannot afford to fork out hard earned money for private medical insurance. Conservative policies would deny everyone who is not insured the care they need."

Note to editor: Number of operations performed by NHS Hospitals in East Lancashire Health Authority - Cataract 2,338, Hernia 880, Hip replacement 283, Knee replacement 307.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 56/00 Wednesday 1 March 2000

MP BANKING ON TROUBLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is outraged by the shock news that Barclays Bank in Earby will close its doors to the public for the last time on 7 April 2000. The MP received a letter from Barclays Bank earlier in the week giving their reasons for the closure. They told him that there has been a significant growth in the demand for their telephone banking service, cash machines and more recently their Internet banking. They also said that there was a trend away from customers using branches for everyday banking for day to day transactions.

The MP said: "So what! Surely a bank should provide a complete service that all of their customers require not just those who use a cash machine. Barclays customers in Earby have already contacted me in great numbers to tell me of their disgust at the closure and it is obvious that there is a tide of anger swelling in the town."

The MP continued: "People might understand this decision more if Barclays Bank was losing money but that couldn't be further from the truth. In 1999 their operating profit was nearly £3 billion - up a staggering 49% They are awash with cash!"

Gordon Prentice said: “This is all about cost cutting and there is no thought to the customers, who at the end of the day are paying the wages of the people who make these decisions. I am in touch with Barclays to express my dismay, and those of my constituents, and I shall be urging them to have a rethink.”

Note to editor: In 1993 Barclays had 2,119 UK branches, this had dropped to 1,950 by 1998.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 56/00 Tuesday 7 March 2000

MP TAKES HEART IN FAST TRACK CLINICS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today hailed news that new fast track chest clinics are to be set up to provide rapid treatment and care for those with heart problems.

The MP was speaking at Westminster as the Prime Minister and Health Secretary Alan Milburn announced that the clinics would mean that patients with suspected angina and other heart conditions would no longer wait for months to be seen. They will be seen by specialists within two weeks of going to their GP.

The MP said: “The Government has pledged to halve deaths from coronary heart disease by 2010. We are investing to tackle the country's biggest killers, cancer and coronary heart disease. In east Lancashire we have a real problem with heart disease and the Government’s new initiative will, I hope, make a big difference.”

Last December, the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Community Health Council published an investigation into Cardiology Services for the area. Given the high incidence of heart disease in East Lancashire, the CHC called for a dedicated Cardio-Vascular Unit.

Note 1 to Editors: The CHC report stated: There should be one dedicated invasive cardiologist per 80.000 of our population, with access to the catheter labs at the specialist centres, on a sessional basis.

Patients need early intervention to improve their quality of life avoiding further deterioration of their condition, the need for more complex surgery or premature death. Therefore there has to be a dramatic reduction in the waiting lists.

There ought to be a properly resourced Cardiac Rehabilitation Team to meet the needs of the population, comprising a minimum of two rehabilitation nurses, plus appropriate administrative and technological support

more follows

MP TAKES HEART IN FAST TRACK CLINICS

There needs to be closer links between the specialist and GPs to improve preventative work in the community.

Note 2 to Editors: The Government is modernising every A&E department that needs it with over a quarter of the 244 schemes now complete. The Government has embarked on the biggest hospital building programme in the history of the NHS - 20 under construction and another 17 in the pipeline. Nurses pay is up for the second year running, up 7.8 per cent (or £1,390) for Grade E nurses and the Government has introduced new flexible ways of working and training. 5,000 nurses have come back to the NHS or started training since 1997.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 57/00 Thursday 9 March 2000

MP URGES RE-THINK BY BARCLAYS OVER EARBY BANK CLOSURE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged Barclays Bank to think again over its decision to close its bank in Earby.

In a motion tabled today which appears in the Commons Order Paper, the MP wrote: “This House is dismayed at the decision of Barclays Bank to close its branch in Earby, a town of 5,000 people; recognises that the branch appears to be well used and is always busy; urges Barclays to listen to those who desperately want to retain the only bank left in the town; and calls on Barclays to reconsider their entire strategy which involves the wholesale closure of banks in small communities across the UK.”

The MP added: “It is clear from speaking to my colleagues here at the Commons that the bank is relentlessly cutting back on its branch network. These closures are happening all over the place.”

The MP has written to Barclays about the Earby decision. He has also received many letters from people living in the town.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 58/00 Thursday 9 March 2000

MP BACKS NEW STRATEGY FOR TEXTILES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new national strategy for the textiles aimed at shoring up and then developing the industry which has shrunk alarmingly over recent years.

The MP has tabled a Commons motion which says Government support and promotion of the domestic textile and clothing industry is crucial for its future success.

A special debate on the textile industry will take place next Tuesday at Westminster.

The MP said: “The textile industry is still very important in areas such as Pendle. But it is battling against the odds. We need to give firms all the help and support we can.”

The Pendle MP is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Clothing and Textiles Group.

Note to Editor: The Commons motion reads: That this House acknowledges the valuable contribution to the United Kingdom economy made by the textile and clothing industry which remains the eighth largest manufacturing industry in the country employing over 300,000 people; notes the continuing job losses in the industry but recognises there are opportunities to develop further in areas such as innovation, branding, niche marketing and diversification; believes that Government support and promotion of the domestic textile and clothing industry is crucial for its future success; welcomes the publication of a National Strategy for the United Kingdom Textile and Clothing Industry drawn up by industry representatives in consultation with the Department of Trade and Industry; and urges the industry and Government to take all necessary steps to implement the recommendations set out in the strategy.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 59/00 Wednesday 15 March 2000

MP RIDICULES CONSERVATIVE TAX GUARANTEE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has hit out against the Conservatives' tax guarantee which promises tax cuts year on year.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I do not want to get into a limbo dance with the Conservatives to see who can offer the lowest taxes. My own view is that the broadest backs should carry the greatest burden."

The MP said: "The Conservatives' tax guarantee should be taken with a pinch of salt. Had it been in operation between 1979 and 1997 it would have meant £18 billion of spending cuts. Before the 1979 election they said they would not increase VAT. In their first budget they doubled it to 15%. Before the 1992 election they said tax would be cut year-on year. Then they gave us the biggest tax hike in peacetime history."

The MP added: "Their new Shadow Chancellor has already displayed his true colours on tax. As Local Government Minister (1990-92), Michael Portillo was one of the keenest advocates of the inequitable poll tax that cost the taxpayer £14 billion to install and dismantle. He said: *'The community charge is a courageous, fair and sensible solution. Far from being a vote loser, with your help it will be a vote winner and launch us on our fourth term.' (11/10/90)* He also imposed VAT on fuel at 8% and wanted to raise it to 17.5%."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 60/00 Friday 3 March 2000

Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP at Blacko CP School Monday 6 March at 9.15am

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting staff and pupils at Blacko CP School this Monday. The school have recently been in the news when their 11 year olds recorded the sixth best result in the National Curriculum exams in Lancashire and making the top 100 in England.

Following his visit to the school the MP will be dropping in at Blacko Village Store at about 10.30am.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 61/00 Monday 13 March 2000

MP WELCOMES JUMBO NEWS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news that the Government is lending British Aerospace £530m to develop the new super-jumbo aircraft. The new aircraft is being designed by the Airbus consortium made up of four European manufacturers including BAe, and is intended to set the new standard for a new generation of airlines.

The MP said: "This news is a shot in the arm for the aerospace business especially here in the North West. The decision could create up to 22,000 new jobs and safeguard up to 60,000."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 62/00 Monday 20 March 2000

MP PLEDGES TO AMEND COUNTRYSIDE BILL TO BAN FOX HUNTING

Pendle MP. Gordon Prentice, has vowed to amend the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill to ban fox hunting.

Speaking in the second reading debate in the Commons today, the MP said: “We all know that the Prime Minister wants to ban fox hunting, as all Labour Members here do. He said as much on television. The Bill could be a vehicle for that. I have an amendment in mind - when the Whips put me on the Standing Committee - that will allow us to ban fox hunting painlessly by saying that no hunt can take place within a mile of a public footpath. It will be very effective when the entire country is criss-crossed with public footpaths.”

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “We cannot kick the issue of fox hunting into the long grass. Here we have a Government Bill which could be amended to outlaw a barbaric blood sport. Private Members Bills have tried and failed to tackle fox hunting because of arcane Parliamentary procedures. Government Bills slice through Commons procedure like a knife through butter.”

“We cannot hang around for the Burns Inquiry (on the economic impact of a ban on fox hunting) to report in June or July when we have a Bill about to go into Committee. We should get cracking.”

The MP also called for the Bill to be amended to include areas of outstanding natural beauty. He told MPs the Forest of Bowland with some of the most spectacular scenery in England deserved protection in the same way as the National Parks.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 63/00 Wednesday 22 March 2000

PRENTICE BACKS BUDGET

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has given the thumbs up to the Budget which will deliver big increases in health and education spending.

Speaking from Westminster after the Chancellor of the Exchequer sat down, the Pendle MP said: “This is a Budget which is good for Pendle. Cash will be going into our top priority areas. It is what people want and expect from a Labour Government. This Budget will make a real difference.”

Note to Editors: The Five Budget Themes

1. Rebuilding Britain's Public Services This Budget makes it clear that the NHS is a key priority of this Government.

an immediate additional boost of £2 billion for the NHS in 2000-01, and real growth of over 6% a year for the years up to 2003-04 - more than double the average growth rate under the Tories (2.9%) and by far the biggest growth of any period in the 50 year history of the NHS

UK health spending will rise from £45 billion last year to £69 billion in 2003-04 a real terms increase of 35 per cent - a cash increase of over 50 per cent

UK health spending will increase from £1,850 per household in 1999 to more than £2,800 in 2004

besides extra spending on health, this Budget announces extra spending in the coming year of £1 billion for education, £285 million to tackle crime, and £200 million to improve transport

2. Fairness for Pensioners Spending an additional £7 billion on pensioners over the course of this Parliament

a further increase in the winter fuel payment from £100 to £150 - paid to all households where someone is over 60 - this year and every year

more follows

PRENTICE BACKS BUDGET

rewarding pensioners who have managed to save by increasing the capital limits attached to the Minimum Income Guarantee - doubling the lower limit from £3,000 to £6,000, and raising the upper limit from £8,000 to £12,000

from 1st November, over 3 million pensioner households will benefit from free TV licences for those aged 75 and over. And any pensioner over 75 who has an unexpired licence which runs beyond 1s November will also be eligible for a refund for every unexpired month

3. Supporting families and Tackling Child Poverty

an additional 50p a week to be added to the Children's Tax Credit when it is introduced in April 2001, so that it is worth up to £442 a year - more than twice the value of the married couple's allowance it replaces

a £4.35 a week increase in the under 16 child credit of the Working Families Tax Credit from June 2000, and in income support and other income-related benefits from October 2000

help for low-income parents when a child is born, including reforms to the Working Families Tax Credit from May 2001 worth as much as £30 a week; and a £100 increase in the Sure Start Maternity Payment from July 2000 - on top of the £100 increase already taking effect in April 2000

4. Increasing Employment Opportunity and Making Work Pay

new Action Teams to help match with people to vacancies in areas where pockets of high unemployment remain

improving and extending the New Deal for 18-24s, over 25s, lone parents and disabled people

an employment tax credit - extending a guaranteed minimum income to people without children

a new Job Grant of £100 from April 2001 to ease the transition into work

5. Building Stronger Business

cuts in capital gains tax to create the most favourable environment Britain has ever seen for encouraging entrepreneurs, rewarding risk-taking and promoting wider share ownership among employees

the measures introduced this year, together with the 3p cut in small company rates already announced, will cut corporation tax bills of small businesses on average by nearly 25%

100% capital allowances for small enterprises investing in IT equipment and a £60 m package to get more small firms on-line and deliver more services on-line

more follows

PRENTICE BACKS BUDGET

a package of measures to reduce prices and improve services for consumers and promote innovation in banking in response to Don Cruickshank's review of competition in banking

Note 2 to Editors: By 2001, when personal tax and benefit measures from this and previous Budgets have come into effect:

1. On average, households will be £460 a year better off.

2. On average, families with children will be £850 a year better off.

3. The tax burden on a single-earner family on average earnings with two children will be the lowest since 1972.

Living standards

4. For a single-earner family with 2 children on £25,000, living standards will have risen by 10% over the Parliament.

5. As a result of WFTC, for a single-earner family with 2 children on £12,500, living standards will rise by 20% this year, the biggest annual rise for 25 years.

Supporting working families

6. A single-earner family with 2 children on £25,000 will be £370 a year better off.

7. A single earner family with 2 children on £12,500 will be £2,600 a year better off.

8. No family with someone in full-time work will get less than £214 a week, over £11,000 a year.

Tackling poverty

9. The poorest 2-child family on income support will be £1,500 a year better off.

10. 1.2 million children will be lifted out of poverty.

11. For a 75-year-old on the MIG, annual income will be over £950 higher in April 2001 than it was in April 1997. For a 75-year-old couple, it will be £1350 higher.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 64/00 Wednesday 22 March 2000

PRENTICE SLAMS CONSERVATIVE SHADOW BUDGET

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has slammed the Conservative's "alternative Budget" which promised tax cuts to the wealthiest 5% of the population.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Official Opposition has completely lost the plot. We spent two years getting the economy back on an even keel and repaying debt they had saddled the country with. Now, they want to use the Budget surplus to cut tax for the super rich."

Note to Editors:
"He (Gordon Brown) can either reduce taxes or he can increase public spending. What I would recommend is that he use that money to reduce taxes."
Michael Portillo, The Money Programme, 12 March 2000

Conservative tax plans

Transferable tax allowances costing £4.25 billion

Private health insurance tax reliefs costing £500 million

Abolishing capital gains tax costing £3.9 billion

Top rate tax cuts at £690 million for every 1p.

For these last two proposals alone - abolishing capital gains tax and cutting the top rate of tax - 75% of the tax cuts would go to the wealthiest 5% of the population, leaving nothing extra for public services like the NHS.

The Conservatives pledge a Tax Guarantee - irrespective of economic circumstances.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 65/00 Wednesday 15 March 2000

THE FEELING IS MUTUAL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting Neil Shoesmith, the Chief Executive of Marsden Building Society this Friday 17 March to discuss the huge changes that are changing the face of the financial services industry. Only recently Barclays announced that it would be closing its branch in Earby, the last bank in the town.

The MP said: “I am a great supporter of the Building Societies movement and I want to do everything I can to ensure it survives and prospers. One of the most important issues is de-mutulisation where Building Societies convert to Banks.”

Last year the MP drew attention to research which showed that Building Societies had been more successful than banks and converted building societies in maintaining their branch networks.

The MP added: “In Pendle we have our own splendid building society - the Marsden. Maintaining the branch network is a key concern for many people and the report published in December 1999 gave the building societies the credit they derserve.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 66/00 Wednesday 15 March 2000

<u>PHOTOCALL:</u> GORDON PRENTICE MP AT McMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL, RAILWAY STREET, NELSON ON FRIDAY 17 MARCH AT 1.00PM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is visiting the staff and pupils at McMillan Nursery this Friday. He will be having a look round and talking to the staff about education issues.

The MP said: "There has been a lot of speculation over the future of Nursery Schools in Pendle recently and obviously this has caused great concern. However, after consultation with staff and parents throughout Lancashire, the County Council has recently announced that they will be looking again at how to solve the problem of falling rolls."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 67/00 Wednesday 15 March 2000

MP IN TALKS WITH TOP COP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is meeting Chief Superintendent, Ian McPherson, this Friday 17 March at Burnley Police Station. The new Chief took over from Mike Griffin who retired recently.

The MP said: "I will be talking about the issues that concern people on the street. Clearly, people are always keen to see more police on the beat and the government has promised Lancashire an extra 126 police officers for front line work over the course of the next three years. I know that in Colne and West Craven the police are setting up new structures in a bid to make officers more accessible to the community and I am interested in hearing how this will work."

The MP added: "Thousands of column inches have been written about CCTV and I am keen to get an update on what impact on crime reduction the cameras are having."

<u>Note to editor:</u> The boost to police numbers was announced by Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke in February. Lancashire will get 25 officers in year 1, 51 in year 2 and 50 in year 3 although years 2

and 3 are provisional at this stage and depend on the force meeting their side of the deal with the Home Office. Funding for year one of the scheme will be £812,500 based on the aggregate annual cost of a new police constable up to a maximum of £32,500. This includes £7,000 per recruit for training.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 68/00 Wednesday 22 March 2000

MP SAYS IT'S GOOD TO TALK BEFORE DIGGING UP THE STREET

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has launched a new campaign to persuade utility, telecoms companies and local authorities to talk to each other and co-ordinate their work programmes before digging up the highway.

He says roads can be dug up time and again causing unnecessary disruption to motorists. The MP wants offenders fined to drive home the point.

The MP was pressing Transport Minister, Keith Hill, to read the riot act to offenders. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Road works are a necessary fact of life. But they don't need to be a permanent feature. Those who dig up the road should get their act together and co-ordinate the work with others wherever possible."

In an emollient reply, the Minister told the MP: "Street works undertakers are required under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 to co-operate with highway authorities and one another, and the authorities for their part are required to co-ordinate works in their streets. Section 66 of the 1991 Act provides that undertakers must carry on and complete works with all reasonable dispatch, and a street authority can require an undertaker obstructing the street more extensively or for longer than is reasonable necessary to comply with a restraining notice."

"Where there is a risk of serious traffic disruption from street works, section 56 enables the street authority to direct the undertaker to carry out work only at certain times, if the disruption can be avoided or reduced by this means."

more follows

MP SAYS IT'S GOOD TO TALK BEFORE DIGGING UP THE STREET

The Minister continued: “In a further development, the 1998 Integrated Transport White Paper made a commitment to consult on options for an incentive system, with penalties, to minimise disruption to road users, and to encourage improved co-ordination of street works.”

“A consultation was launched last October and my Department is considering the responses to the consultation in order to decide on the best way forward.”

“Finally, Regulations have been made under powers in the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, and came into effect last year, to facilitate and encourage the electronic transfer of information about street works and other works in the highway between utilities such as telecoms companies and highway authorities. This will ensure greater consistency and speed in transferring and registering the information, which in turn will help authorities in their co-ordination role.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 69/00 Wednesday 22 March 2000

MP CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION ON HOUSING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging the Government to act to tackle decay and dereliction in the nation’s housing stock. Figures released by the MP today show that 64.8% of all dwellings in Pendle fall in Council Tax Band A - the lowest. 14.5% of the housing stock is unfit - third highest after Stoke and Burnley where almost a quarter of the total is unfit. In terms of vacant dwellings, Pendle comes in at number 6 - after Burnley, Liverpool, Wear Valley, Hull and Manchester.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “These statistics point to the scale of the task in hand. We have to move mountains to get our housing stock up to scratch. Burnley and Pendle have some of the worst housing in the country. I am expecting a lot from the Government’s Green Paper on Housing which is due out soon.”

Local Authority	% in Band A	% of hsg unfit	% of hsg vacant
South Tyneside	67.9	2.8	3.5
Sedgefield	71.1	2.8	2.4
Kingston upon Hull	73.7	3.7	6.2
Derwentside	73.1	4.1	4.5
Wear Valley	67.7	5.5*	6.7*
Gateshead	66.3	5.8	3
Nottingham	68	6	2.4
Hartlepool	64	6.2	3.7

Barnsley	65.3	6.2	4.2
Sunderland	67.6	6.9	3.5
Manchester	70.1	7	5.7
Bolsover	65.8	7.7	5.4
Wansbeck	73.3	9.2	5.3
Blyth Valley	63.8	11.8	2.6
Leicester	63.6	12.6*	5.2*
Liverpool	67.6	13.7*	8.1
Easington	83.7	14.3	5.3
Pendle	**64.8**	**14.5**	**5.5**
Stoke on Trent	64.3	17.7*	4.1
Burnley	64.5	23	9.9

MP CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION ON HOUSING

(1) Source: DETR annual Housing Investment Programme (HIP) (Operational Information) returns 1999. * Figures for unfit and vacant housing of the Other Public Sector stock, which includes housing owned by Government Agencies, Regional, Health, Police and Fire authorities, were unavailable for these authorities from the 1999 HIP returns. This sector covers a very small percentage of the overall total housing stock.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 70/00 Monday 20 March 2000

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle last month and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,620 (1,491 in January) - an unemployment rate of 4.7%. There were 1199 men and 421 women out of work. The corresponding figures in January were respectively 1107 and 384.

Nationally, claimant unemployment is down 6,700 on last month to 1,154,000. The Office for National Statistics confirmed that the number stands at 27,560,000.

Commenting on the figures, the Pendle MP said: "There has been a fall in the number of jobs in some sectors, but the increase in employment in others has to a large extent made up for this. In places like Pendle there are pressures on traditional jobs in manufacturing. We've got to do all we can to support our manufacturing base even though there is growth in other areas of business."

The MP added: "I want to see Gordon Brown give manufacturing a shot in the arm."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 71/00 Wednesday 22 March 2000

MP ON THE SHELF

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, marked World Book Day on 10 March by donating a book of his choice to the local library service. The MP handed a copy of 'A Right to Roam' by author Marion Shoard to David Lightfoot from Lancashire County Library Services.

The personally signed copy is very topical with the Countryside Bill now before Parliament. The MP's own Private Members Bill on the Right to Roam was published last year and he withdrew it after debate when the Government promised to bring in its own Bill.

The MP said: "With my own personal interest in access to the countryside I am particularly pleased to donate a copy of 'A Right to Roam' as a way of marking World Book Day."

David Lightfoot added: "World Book Day is one of the events the Library Association has organised to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Public Libraries Act. The support of the MPs for their local library service is welcomed."

The book the MP donated will be going on the shelf at the Barnoldswick Library in the town where the MP lives.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 72/00 Tuesday 21 March 2000

MP OUTRAGED AT BARCLAYS CLOSURE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is outraged by confirmation that Barclays will not reconsider its decision to close its Earby branch. This comes despite huge local opposition.

The MP wrote to Barclays calling on the bank to think again. The banks Head of Group Public Affairs, Andrew MacThomas, told the MP: "The decision to close the branch has been a difficult one, and has only been taken after a great deal of consideration. We are seeing dramatic changes in the way that our customers choose to do their business with us and in particular we are seeing an explosion in the use of our telephone and internet banking facilities."

The MP said: "This is all phoney concern. My letter to them pointed out that there were great numbers of customers in Earby who want to be able to go into their local branch for day to day transactions. A bank should provide a complete service that all their customers require not just those who use telephone banking or the internet."

The decision not to reconsider the Earby branch closure comes just as Banks have been slammed for overcharging their customers by up to £5bn. Don Cruickshank, the Treasury's special banking investigator, has just published a 344-page report into the financial services sector. Mr Cruickshank condemned what he said were £3bn-£5bn of excess profits mostly from personal and small business customers, by charging too much for money transfers and paying too little for deposits.

The MP said: "I welcome the recommendations by Don Cruickshank to legislate on the monopoly that banks are enjoying. I only hope that this will reverse the trend of Barclays and the other banks of closing branches in small towns and rural areas."

Note to editor: The MP tabled a motion to the House of Commons on 9 March saying: 'This House is dismayed at the decision of Barclays Bank to close its branch in Earby, a town of 5,000 people; recognises that the branch appears to be well used and is always busy; urges Barclays to listen to those who desperately want to retain the only bank left in the town; and calls on Barclays to reconsider their entire strategy which involves the wholesale closure of banks in small communities across the UK.'

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 73/00 Wednesday 22 March 2000

PUBLIC TO HAVE A SAY ON BARLICK SCHOOL

The public is to have a say on the future of Rainhall Road School in Barnoldswick. Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has been told by County Director of Education of Lancashire County Council (LCC), Christopher Trinick, that the public consultation is to take place in the summer term.

The MP said: "There are a number of issues affecting Rainhall Road School the most significant being the fall in pupil numbers. There is a capacity of 140 at the school and only 65 currently on their roll. At the same time there are 191 unfilled places in nearby schools and I am told this is likely to increase to more than 300 by 2005."

The school was inspected by OFSTED in February 1997. At the time of the inspection there were 87 pupils on roll. The report was satisfactory noting a number of positive features including very good leadership provided by the Headteacher in conjunction with the governing body.

The MP concluded: "Clearly the public consultation will be very important in determining the future of the school. All aspects of the school's role within the community must be taken into account."

The MP will be visiting the school next Friday (31 March) for a chat with Headteacher, Mrs Shirley Cormack.

Note to Editor: The school's intake in September 1999 was only 5 pupils. Live births in pre school year groups in wards serving the 8 schools within a 2 mile radius of Rainhall Road show a reduction of nearly 9%.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 73/00 Thursday 23 March 2000

MP CALLS FOR DEBATE ON SYNCHROTRON

The Government's decision to build the new synchrotron in Oxfordshire rather than at Daresbury in Cheshire was described today as "inexplicable" by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

In the Commons he told the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett that the new investment in Oxfordshire amounted to technology transfer from North to South. The synchrotron was conceived and developed over 25 years at Daresbury.

Earlier, the Pendle MP had quizzed the Prime Minister on the factors which led him to decide that the new synchrotron should be built at the Rutherford Applelon Laboratory in Oxfordshire.

The Prime Minister told the MP: "The Government's position is that the scientific case was marginally in favour of the Rutherford site and site issues were neutral. Both partners expressed the view that they favoured the Rutherford site. The French Education Ministry stated publicly that "This site was strongly supported by the French partners in the project and we are delighted with this choice". The Wellcome Trust stated that they would withdraw from the partnership if the decision was taken to locate the project at Daresbury."

Speaking after the Commons exchange, the MP said: "We need to know the details of how the decision was made. We cannot have our regional policy decided by the Wellcome Trust or by the French Government."

Note to Editors: An adjournment debate on the decision will take place on Wednesday 29 March at 9.30am.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 74/00 Thursday 23 March 2000

MP IN BID TO RECYCLE YESTERDAY'S NEWS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is making a fresh attempt tomorrow (Friday) to pilot a Bill through Parliament which will force publishers to collect and recycle the paper used in their newspapers. The Pendle MP's Bill - the Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill - will ensure newspaper and magazine
publishers collect and recycle 65% of the volume of the paper they put on the market by 2016, with 2 interim targets.

The Bill is down for debate tomorrow - but only after two other Bills are disposed of. The MP said: "I am keeping my fingers crossed that we will reach my Bill and there will be time to debate it."

Speaking at Westminster in advance of the debate, the MP said: "The Bill would boost the newspaper recycling industry that at present is flagging due to the low and volatile price of waste paper by ensuring that more papers are collected and recycled and that newspapers contain more recycled paper."

"The 65% target is bang in line with the landfill directive which requires the UK to reduce household biodegradable waste, such as paper, going to landfill by 65% by 2016. It would also lead to increased funds for local authority recycling, essential if constituents are to have quality recycling schemes."

"The Bill would also ensure that newspapers contain more recycled paper - 80% by 2010, again with two interim targets. I believe these targets are reasonable and achievable and in fact the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Bill states that the newspaper industry is confident of being able to reach the first target of 65% recycled paper by 2003 even before my Bill stipulates! I hope the industry will respond as positively to the

more follows

more challenging 80% target. I am encouraged to hear that Ian Broxup, Finance Director for Aylesford Newsprint, the country's largest paper reprocessor, told Materials Recycling Week recently that the target "looks ambitious but might be achievable".

'The benefits this Bill would bring are considerable - to wildlife, climate change, jobs and the economy."

"Most of our wood for newspapers comes from Scandinavia, where intensive forest farming has put over 1700 species at risk, including the Brown Bear, the Golden Eagle and the White-backed woodpecker. If we increase newspaper recycling then tree-felling would be less intensive and so the pressure on wildlife would be greatly reduced."

“Recycling paper also leads to less so-called "greenhouse gas" emissions than the alternatives of landfill and incineration - and so helps combat dangerous climate change. Only last month the British Newsprint Manufacturers' Association said that recycling old newspapers is cheaper and environmentally preferable to incineration and that recycling generates more jobs than incineration and helps to displace, newsprint imports.”

“And there would also be considerable benefit to jobs and the economy. According to a report commissioned by Friends of the Earth, the Bill would lead to expansion of the UK paper industry, creating around 10,000 new jobs by 2010 and also that it would also reduce the UK import Bill by £175 million by the same date.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 75/00 Friday 24 March 2000

PENDLE MP’s RECYCLING BILL MOVES A STEP NEARER TO BECOMING LAW

Gordon Prentice’s Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill was given a second reading in the Commons this afternoon and will now go into Committee for detailed line by line scrutiny.

Speaking after the House gave its approval, the MP said: “I am absolutely delighted. My Bill captures the spirit of the times. It is good for the environment. It is pure common-sense to recycle the millions of tonnes of paper that we use every day of the year.”

Notes to Editors: Speaking yesterday, the MP said: “The Bill would boost the newspaper recycling industry that at present is flagging due to the low and volatile price of waste paper by ensuring that more papers are collected and recycled and that newspapers contain more recycled paper.”

“The 65% target is bang in line with the landfill directive which requires the UK to reduce household biodegradable waste, such as paper, going to landfill by 65% by 2016. It would also lead to increased funds for local authority recycling.

“The Bill would also ensure that newspapers contain more recycled paper - 80% by 2010, again with two interim targets. I believe these targets are reasonable and achievable and in fact the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Bill states that the newspaper industry is confident of being able to reach the first target of 65% recycled paper by 2003.

"Most of our wood for newspapers comes from Scandinavia, where intensive forest farming has put over 1700 species at risk. Recycling paper also leads to less so-called "greenhouse gas" emissions than the alternatives of landfill and incineration - and so helps combat dangerous climate change. According to a report commissioned by Friends of the Earth, the Bill would lead to expansion of the UK paper industry, creating around 10,000 new jobs by 2010 and also that it would also reduce the UK import Bill by £175 million by the same date."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 76/00 Tuesday 28 March 2000

AITKEN POINTS THE FINGER AT PRENTICE

The disgraced former Conservative Cabinet Minister, Jonathan Aitken, has named local MP, Gordon Prentice, as being instrumental in his downfall. Aitken was convicted of perjury
last year and has just been released from prison.

Extracts from Aitken's book, serialised in the Sunday Times at the weekend, charts the progress of his fall from grace. Aitken wrote: "During the Christmas adjournment debate in the House of Commons (in 1997), Gordon Prentice, the Labour member for Pendle, called for my prosecution."

Aitken added: "I knew enough about the top brass of the Met to know they would be spurred into action."

The MP said: "The issue was very simple. Jonathan Aitken lied on oath and all I was doing, back in December 1997, was urging the police to treat him as they would any other member of the public. I called on them to pass the papers to the Crown Prosecution Service so that the whole sordid affair could finally be settled."

The MP added: "We can't have one law for the rich and powerful and another for the rest of us."

Note to Editor: The Aitken libel action collapsed in June 1997 and the MP raised the matter in the Commons in December that year.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 77/00 Thursday 30 March 2000

MP BACKS STRAW IN CRACK DOWN ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves by Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to get tough on anti-social behaviour.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “This Government is determined to tackle the unacceptable level of anti-social behaviour which blights so many communities. Unfortunately, the Conservative Opposition don't take the problem seriously, describing the Government’s action as a 'gimmick.'“

Home Secretary Jack Straw today announced that the government accepts and will implement all the recommendations of a Social Exclusion Unit report on anti-social behaviour.

The Government introduced anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), welcomed by both the police and local authorities to deal with problems which can cast a shadow over whole neighbourhoods.

The direct cost of vandalism and graffiti alone is estimated at £1.3 billion per year. Where they have been used, ASBOs have proved a success and the Government wants to see more of them used to help the innocent victims of harassment and intimidation.

Thames Valley Police Chief Constable Charles Pollard has described ASBOs as 'particularly welcome.'

The MP commented: “The ASBO is a very valuable tool in the armoury. I want to see them used.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 78/00 Tuesday 28 March 2000

BIG CASH INJECTION FOR LOCAL NHS says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed a big cash injection into the NHS in East Lancashire.

The immediate cash boost amounts to a staggering £23m - a real terms increase of 6.5%.

The East Lancashire Health Authority's budget for 2000/1 will rise to £384m.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is a real shot in the arm for East Lancashire. The NHS is one of Labour's top priorities and we must ensure that this extra money is well spent."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 79/00 Tuesday 28 March 2000

MP WELCOMES POLICE FOUNDATION REPORT ON DRUGS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the report of the independent charity, the Police Foundation, which today proposes sweeping changes to Britain's drug laws.

The Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 concluded that "careful reform of Britain's 30 year old drugs law is needed as part of an effective strategy to reduce the harms caused by drugs and by the law itself." The Inquiry proposed the reclassification of individual drugs with heroine and cocaine remaining in Class A, the most dangerous category, and ecstasy and LSD transferring to Class B and cannabis going to Class C.

The Inquiry, whose members included two Chief Constables and eminent scientists, recommended that prison should no longer be a penalty for possession of drugs in classes B and C. It also recommended that the ban on the medical use of cannabis should be lifted.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "The Inquiry is like a breath of fresh air into a debate that had become stale. The Inquiry draws the distinction between dealing and trafficking and proposes harsh penalties, but begins to follow the practice in other European countries on drug classification. Here in Britain, 500 people were sent to prison in 1997 for possessing cannabis - where the maximum sentence is 7 years - and another 2,000 went to prison for other cannabis related offences."

"I want a Royal Commission to look at this whole area of the law."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 80/00 Wednesday 29 March 2000

"CLAIM WHAT IS YOURS" PRENTICE TELLS PENDLE PENSIONERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing the Government's take-up campaign launched today to encourage pensioners to claim their entitlement to the Minimum Income Guarantee.

The Government is giving more help to poorer pensioners,
and rewarding those who have worked and saved.

Social Security Secretary, Alastair Darling, today launched the biggest-ever campaign to make sure pensioners who have lost out over the last 20 years get the help they are entitled to with the Minimum Income Guarantee.

The Minimum Income Guarantee, increased next month, will ensure an income of £78.45 a week for every pensioner and £121.95 for every household. As we announced in the budget, Labour will also increase the capital limits for pensioners entitled to the MIG, worth an average £5 a week and up the pensioners' tax allowance to £5,790, meaning 6 million pensioners will pay
no tax at all.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Of course there is a lot more to do but the Government is working on it. The Chancellor said in the Budget Statement that the weekly increase next April is likely to be between £2 and £3. The Government introduced the Winter Fuel Allowance and raised it, first to £100, now to £150 a year. It restored free eye tests for over-60s. It cut VAT on fuel. And from 1 November, every pensioner over 75 will get their TV licence
free of charge, benefiting more than 3 million households. And now we really want to encourage the take-up of benefits."

more follows

PENSIONERS

"Under the previous Government, one million pensioners did not receive the Income Support they were entitled and nothing was done to encourage take up. The Conservatives imposed VAT on fuel then tried to raise it to 17.5 per cent. They introduced charges on eye tests and now they would abolish the MIG and the Winter Allowance, and force thousands of pensioners to pay thousands of pounds for private healthcare."

Note to Editors: The Social Security Secretary wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: I am pleased to be able to tell you about the Government's plans for a take-up campaign to encourage pensioners to claim their entitlement to the MIG which is paid through income support.

The Government is determined to tackle pensioner poverty. We are therefore targeting help on those who need it most, which is why we have introduced the MIG - worth £78 for a single pensioner and £121 for a couple from this April. But we must ensure that this help actually gets to those who need it most. The government is therefore launching a major national take-up campaign, which is designed to identify pensioners who we think are entitled, and encourage them to claim in a way which they find more acceptable.

We know from our research that many pensioners do not claim because they are put off by the stigma and complexity of claiming. That is why we are taking a number of steps to make sure people get their entitlement. First, we will be launching a television advertising campaign, which will run throughout the summer and autumn to promote the minimum income guarantee. Second, we will be writing to around 2 million pensioners whom our records suggest are most likely to have underlying entitlement.

Thirdly, we are determined to improve the service delivery of the MIG. We will also be introducing a new free telephone claim service for pensioners to claim their MIG without having to leave their homes. The new Tele-Claims Centre will allow pensioners access to specially trained operators who can advise on entitlement and help complete the paperwork to claim the minimum income guarantee. Pensioners can choose to complete a standard claim form or the new Electronic Claim Form. Information provided by telephone will be recorded on the electronic form. This will be sent to the pensioner to check and sign and then returned by post to be processed in the normal way.

The campaign will start in May. In the meantime pensioners, who think that they may be entitled to claim their minimum income guarantee now, can . contact a national free phone line service on 0800 028 11 11 to request a claim form. No pensioner should have to get by when they could be getting more. I hope you will play your part in ensuring that this messages reaches as many pensioners as possible.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 81/00 Tuesday 28 March 2000

NHS BOOST

Hospitals and GP practices in Pendle are to receive an immediate cash boost as part of an extra £7.47 million allocation to the East Lancashire health authority. This new money comes as a result of the record NHS spending unveiled in last week's Budget. The total increase (in real terms) in East Lancashire's budget amounts to £23m for 2000/1.

The NHS nationwide is to receive the largest sustained increase ever - up 35% above inflation over 5 years. The extra money announced today is the first part of a major increase in money for the health service.

The new money will put local health services back on a sound financial footing. The cash boost is expected to be used to develop new services for elderly people in preparation for winter, reduce waiting lists and waiting times for in patients and out-patients and help to pay for new drugs and treatments as the NHS tackles the post code lottery of care.

'This new NHS money is to be fast-tracked through to front line hospital and GP services. This means every penny will benefit patient services rather than pay for red tape. Over the lifetime of the Government £1 billion is being saved from bureaucracy to pay for NHS services.

Note to Editors: The letter from the Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, to the Pendle MP, dated 28 March, reads: "In his Budget Statement the Chancellor announced the levels of funding that the NHS in England will receive in the next four years, beginning April 2000.

NHS funding will grow from £40.1 billion in 1999/2000 to £44.2 billion in 2000/2001 - an increase of 7.9 % in real terms. In subsequent years it will grow to £48.0 billion (5.8%), £52,0 billion (5.8%) and £56,4 billion (5.8%). Over the four years it will rise by 6.3% in real terms - the largest sustained increase the NHS has ever had.

I am today announcing details of immediate extra allocations to Health Authorities and also to Primary Care Groups and NHS Trusts. On average Health Authorities have already had a 6.8% increase in resources. Today I am making available a further £660m which will bring overall growth in cash terms up to 8.9% and in real terms to 6.2%.

The money will be used to achieve financial balance, to improve waiting lists and times, to implement winter plans, including developing intermediate care services and to action NICE recommendations.

I am pleased to tell you that East Lancashire Health Authority's share of this extra money is £7.47 million. Together with the allocations already announced this will bring East Lancashire Health Authority's allocation for 2000/2001 to £384.25 million an increase of 9.23% (6.56% in real terms). In order that the new extra resources are invested in front-line patient services I have directed Health Authorities to pass out the money to Primary Care Groups which should make most of it available to NHS Trusts.

The step change in resources the Government has provided for the NHS must now be matched by a step change in results. These significant additional funds provide the platform for a sustained programme of modernisation in local services. The money must be used wisely and well. There should no longer be any excuse for poor performance.

I have, therefore, decided that part of the extra immediate funds for 2000/2001 will be directly linked to performance. £600m will be available from 1st April for local Health services but distribution of the remaining £60m will be dependent upon local priorities being met. This new incentive fund will be released in stages throughout the year in the form of performance bonuses.

This new approach signals my determination to improve performance in Health Service delivery in all parts of the country. I will be making separate announcements about the allocation of further funds but I believe it is important to make these first payments as quickly as possible.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 82/00 Monday 10 April 2000

MP CALLS FOR WIDE-RANGING DEBATE ON HOUSING GREEN PAPER PROPOSALS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for a wide ranging debate on the Government's Housing Green Paper which was published last week. Consultation runs until the end of July.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Green paper is the first comprehensive review of housing for 23 years It sets out a wide range of proposals to modernise housing policy, including social housing, home ownership, housing benefit and the

private rented sector. It represents a major step towards meeting the challenges we face and will feed into the forthcoming Spending Review and the Urban and Rural White Papers."

The MP added: "Here in East Lancashire we have some of the oldest housing in Britain and much of it is in dire straits. We have very high levels of vacant private sector houses - some are simply abandoned. I have told Ministers that we can't deal with the legacy of decades of neglect on our own. We need help from the Government. I want to see the local council and all those involved in housing policy and delivery taking up the invitation to respond to the Green Paper."

Note to Editors: The Government propose new approaches to help poorer homeowners (such as pensioners) to improve their homes with better-targeted grants and low cost loans. There are no significant changes to the Right to Buy scheme. The Government intends to promote a stronger, more strategic role for local authorities in housing to enable solutions to be tailored to local conditions.

The Government will encourage the creation of new arms-length companies to manage local authority-owned housing, with the best performing authorities which have established such companies given extra scope to borrow additional money. Reports of the death of council

more follows

housing have been greatly exaggerated. The Government want to see a diverse range of landlords offering high quality social housing and services, more responsive to tenants' needs. The Government will support stock transfer from local authorities to registered social landlords but only where tenants vote for it.

Average rents for social housing will be held at around their present level (currently some 30% to 40% below market rents) but some rents increasing to reflect improvements in quality as a result of extra investment; and some rents changing to remove unjustifiable differences between rents charged for homes owned by registered social landlords and local authorities.

Modernising Housing Benefit

Develop a single claims process for benefits, shorten processing times and improve information sharing between DSS and local authorities. Develop a new funding regime based on performance against targets in individual local authorities to cut fraud and error and set up a single national fraud hotline service.

Social justice in putting an end to poor quality housing, clamping down on unscrupulous landlords and strengthening protection available to vulnerable people; and reforming housing benefit to improve service quality and creating fairer social rents.

Higher Quality in both the standard of housing and in the management and services provided, whether by builders, lenders or landlords. More choice for those who have little say in how or where they are housed, whether they are social tenants or people struggling to get onto the housing ladder (including a new Starter Home Initiative to help key workers).

Raising standards in the private rented sector

The Government will continue to help landlords to improve their standards through voluntary approaches, such as local accreditation and lettings schemes, and through best practice guidance. The Government propose a licensing system to improve standards in houses in multiple occupation and set out options for tackling the worst landlords - (such as discretionary powers for local authorities to license privately rented homes in certain areas),

The Government is introducing a new fitness rating to aid enforcement action on unsafe homes and set out options for taking firmer action against the minority of bad private sector landlords who neglect their properties and tenants.

Ensure unscrupulous landlords do not profit from Housing Benefit by placing conditions on the receipt of housing benefit or limiting payments of housing benefit to landlords (applies only to areas of low/medium demand for housing).

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 83/00 Wednesday 12 April 2000

THE COSTS OF SPEEDING

Motorists in Lancashire are paying heavily for breaking the speed limit says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. And he claims the police are more vigilant than ever in catching the unwary - as well as those who deliberately “burn rubber”.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Everyone who drives has an obligation to other road users to drive carefully. When the police tell us that speed kills, they are simply stating the obvious.”

“Unfortunately, too few motorists are taking the advice to heart and fines for speeding offences in Lancashire have risen inexorably in recent years. Fixed penalties have shot up too.”

The MP unearthed the figures after hearing that some motorists were complaining about new speed limits in Sough in his Pendle constituency.

Fines for speeding offences in Lancashire

	1993	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**
Lancs	£269,000	£234,000	£268,000	£395,000	£438,000

Fixed Penalties for speeding offences in Lancashire

	1993	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**
Lancs	£322,000	£318,000	£515,000	£821,000	£953,000

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 84/00 Tuesday 11 April 2000

WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS

Details of how men aged 60-65 can claim their entitlement to the £150 Winter Fuel Allowance have been released by the Government. Last year, the European Court ruled that the Allowance was discriminatory in that women could receive it on reaching the state retirement age of 60 but men had to wait until they reached 65. The Government looked again at the issue and the allowance now goes to men and women on the same basis.

In a letter to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, the Social Security Secretary, Alistair Darling, wrote: "All your constituents need to do to receive their payments - for either this coming winter or for past winters - is to wait until they receive a mailshot, complete the claim form and send it back for processing. However, if they have not been contacted by mid June, they should ring the Department on the winter fuel helpline for guidance."

Note to Editors: The Social Security Secretary, Alistair Darling, wrote to the Pendle MP on 11 April as follows: You may remember that I wrote to you last December setting out the Government's intentions following the European Court of Justice's ruling. I said then that, once we had set up the necessary processes, I would make a further announcement to advise people who may be newly eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment, how to claim. Since then we have announced that next year's Winter Fuel Payment will increase to £150 for eligible households.

As I indicated at the time, it was necessary to develop a claims process to ensure that the right amount is paid to the right person in respect of each year a Winter Fuel Payment is due. As you will appreciate we do not hold up to date records of all people who do not receive any pension or benefit at the moment - especially men aged between 60-65 who have no contact with the Department. We therefore, had to set up a new process to contact them.

Our priorities are to ensure that people entitled to payments for previous years will receive them as soon as practically possible, and those people entitled to payments for this coming winter should receive them before Christmas. The arrangements are as follows:-

more follows

WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS

Those people, who have already registered their interest with the Department, will now be written to with a claim form for completion.

•All your constituents need to do to receive their payments - for either this

•We are identifying those who we think are eligible from

Departmental records (for both past winters and this coming winter) and we will write to them over a five week period starting in May. The letter will invite claims and attach a claim form for completion.

•A simultaneous national advertising campaign will be set in train to encourage those who think they are newly eligible, and who have not received a letter by mid June, to contact the Department.

•From June up to Christmas, information and advertising campaigns will also run to help ensure that people are fully aware of how to claim and when they will receive their payments.

•Arrangements for notifying representative bodies will be set in train so that they will be able to advise those who contact them for advice.

•A live Winter Fuel Payment helpline is operative - the number is 08459 15 15 15

•People will also be able to download claim forms from the Department's own website (www.dss.gov.uk) or obtain claim forms on request from the Winter Fuel Payment helpline.

•Payments for past winters will be made from the end of June onwards via bank accounts or by Giro.

All your constituents need to do to receive their payments - for either this coming winter or for past winters - is to wait until they receive a mailshot, complete the claim form and send it back for processing. However, if they have not been contacted by mid June, they should ring the Department on the winter fuel helpline for guidance.

No-one who has previously received a winter fuel payment, and whose benefit circumstances have not changed, needs to make a claim for this coming winter. Nor do those people who are newly eligible for a payment this coming winter and who expect to be receiving state Retirement Pension or another social Security benefit (excluding Child Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit) during 18-24 September 2000. Payments will, as last year, be made automatically over a four-week period in the run up to next Christmas,

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 85/00 Monday 10 April 2000

PENDLE MP BACKS MOVE ON FLEXIBLE PUB HOURS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today backed moves by Home Secretary Jack Straw to reform licensing hours in England. The proposals in the White Paper on licensing reform would allow pubs and bars, theoretically, to stay open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In practice, only a few bars in busy city or town centre locations would remain open for extended periods.

The White Paper proposes new powers for the police to be able to shut down premises where drinkers are rowdy or violent. A new system of personal licences

allowing holders to sell alcohol from any building will be introduced and responsibility for issuing licences will be transferred from magistrates courts to local authorities, subject to appeal to the crown court.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: “The 11pm closing time is a throwback to an earlier age. People cascade out of pubs at the same time - all looking for taxis or something to eat. With flexible closing times this would disappear.”

“I am all in favour of sensible drinking. Too many people get senseless in the rush to drink up before closing time.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 85/00 Wednesday 5 April 2000

MP BACKS BID FOR BEACON STATUS

Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP at Walton Lane Nursery School, Nelson on Friday 7 April at 1.30pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling in at Walton Lane Nursery School to meet Headteacher Mrs Audrey Wilson, the staff and children to have a chat and a look round the nursery. Following an excellent OFSTED report the school has been invited by the DfEE to put in a bid for Beacon Status.

The MP said: “This is a fitting tribute to the good practice of the nursery and I am delighted they have achieved so much. I wish them every success in their bid.”

The school has also achieved the “Investors in People” award which was presented to them this week.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 86/00 Tuesday 11 April 2000

MP RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT SMALL SCHOOLS

Schools Minister Estelle Morris has told local MP, Gordon Prentice, that the Government is to do more to help small schools stay viable. The Pendle MP expressed concern following the controversy over the future of Rainhall Road School in Barnoldswick - the town where he lives.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I am obviously concerned about the future of schools with small rolls. We have got to do what we can to keep schools open where they are providing a good education for the children in their care."

The Minister told the MP: "The viability of a school may depend on a range of factors and differ according to the particular situation in the area, it is for the local education authority to plan the provision of places in order to maximise parental preference and ensure good quality education cost effectively. Local education authorities have freedom in the budgets they delegate to schools to recognise the additional unit costs of small schools."

She added: "We are establishing a Small School Support Fund from September to enable small schools to pilot innovative approaches to joint working and other forms of collaboration, and funds are being made available over 1999-2001 to provide more administrative support staff in small schools. There is also a presumption against the closure of schools in rural areas, where access to alternative provision may be more difficult."

The Pendle MP commented: "I am keeping my fingers crossed that we can find a way through this. There is a capacity of 140 at the school and only 65 currently on their roll. The school's intake in September 1999 was only 5 pupils. Live births in pre school year groups in wards serving the 8 schools within a 2 mile radius of Rainhall Road show a reduction of nearly 9%." *more*

MP RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT SMALL SCHOOLS

The MP visited Rainhall Road School at the end of March to speak to the Head Mrs Shirley Cormack and a number of Governors.

Note to Editors: The public is to have a say on the future of Rainhall Road School in Barnoldswick. Public consultation is to take place in the summer term. The school was inspected by OFSTED in

February 1997. At the time of the inspection there were 87 pupils on roll. The report was satisfactory noting a number of positive features including very good leadership provided by the Headteacher in conjunction with the governing body.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 87/00 Tuesday 11 April 2000

PENDLE POSTMASTERS AND MISTRESSES LOBBY MP

Representatives of Pendle's postmasters and mistresses are to lobby local MP, Gordon Prentice, tomorrow over the future of their local Post Offices. They say that the changes the Government is introducing in 2003 for the payment of state benefits will drive many of them out of business.

Speaking at Westminster before the meeting, the MP said: "The Government wants benefits and pensions to be made by automated credit transfer but not before 2003. And anyone who still wants to draw their benefits in cash from their local Post Office after then will still be able to do so. However, the Post Office estimates that sub-post offices could potentially lose 40% of their income if lots of people stop coming through the door so clearly this is a big issue that needs to be addressed."

"There is obviously heightened concerns following the decision of Barclays to pull the plug on many of their branches in small towns such as Earby. I don't want to see small communities such as ours in Pendle denied access to financial services. I am pressing the Government to help the sub-post offices to survive despite the fact that they have been closing at an alarming rate for years."

"Since 1990 756 have closed but in the 1980's there were some really bad years. In 1984-85 an astonishing 389 shut up shop for good. And if that's not bad enough, for years now banks have also been closing branches in towns and rural areas. I want to see sub-post offices fill the banking gap. The Post Office is in the process of installing 3,000 hole-in-the-wall machines across the country but there are 18,000 Post Offices."

Note to Editors: Colin Baker, the General Secretary of the National Federation of Sub Postmasters wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: "Next

more follows

PENDLE POSTMASTERS AND MISTRESSES LOBBY MP

Wednesday 12th April, thousands of sub Postmasters and Sub post mistresses and representatives from other groups will arrive in Westminster to express their discontent at the Government's handling of the change in benefit payment methods.

As a direct consequence of these changes, planned to be introduced in 2003, thousands of sub post offices will be forced out of business. Many in your constituency will close. The Government's current policy will mean:

*people losing their businesses, their livelihoods and their employees their jobs (sub post offices support over 40,000 full and part time jobs)

*pensioners being pressurised into using bank accounts

*child benefit being spent by fathers rather than mothers

*unemployed people not having to show up during normal working hours to collect their benefit

The National Federation of Sub Postmasters is talking to the Government about finding a solution to this crisis. But we have not yet been shown how sub post offices will continue to be allowed to administer benefit payments under the Government's reforms, our vision is of post offices being at the centre of community life in countryside and towns alike - not of a network shutting down, Many will close, even before 2003, if the outlook remains so bleak,

Please tell Ministers of your concerns and those of the 2,5 million others who have signed our petition. It is in the Government's power to safeguard our post offices' future. I enclose a briefing document that I hope you will find useful if you are able to meet representatives from sub-post offices in your constituency on Wednesday.

Note 2 to Editor: The Government published the Postal Services Bill on 28 January 2000 and it provides for:
•Conversion of The Post Office to Plc status with the introduction of an arm's-length relationship with the Government
•The freedom to borrow up to £75 million at commercial rates in each of the next five years to fund growth.
• A universal service obligation enshrined in law - to provide every address in the United Kingdom with an affordable mail collection and delivery service supported by a nationwide network of post offices.
• The creation of a new independent regulator - the Postal Services Commission
• The replacement of the existing Post Office Users' National Council by a Consumer Council for Postal Services.

Note 3 to Editor. The number of sub-post offices in 1978-79 was 21,213 compared to 18,175 in 1998-99. Since 1990-91 there have been a total of 756 sub-post offices closed. 389 closed in 1984-85 the highest in any single year.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 88/00 Wednesday 12 April 2000

SPENDING BOOST FOR PENDLE

As the political parties gear up for the council elections, local MP, Gordon Prentice, has unveiled a list of Government measures which he says will benefit people in Pendle.

Speaking from Westminster, the campaigning MP said: "This Government has a record it can be proud of. We are putting huge amounts of new cash into our hospitals and schools but we've got to make sure it is money well spent. There is of course a colossal amount still to do. I want to do more for pensioners and for our manufacturing industry. These are two top priority areas."

"Our critics give the impression everything can be transformed overnight. That is impossible. But we are making step by step progress. We know where we are going and we need to take people with us."

Note to Editors:

NHS: This year East Lancashire Health Authority has received a total allocation of £384,249,000 - a real terms increase of £23,000,000.

Education: Lancashire Education Authority spending gets a £25,000,000 boost to raise standards in schools. Every Pendle school will get a direct grant. A typical secondary school will get £40,000 and primary schools will get up to £9,000 for books and learning materials.

Class sizes: The number of 5,6 and 7 year olds in Lancashire taught in classes over 30 has fallen from 42% in 1997 to 10% this year. This means 13,862 infants in Lancashire are now in smaller classes.

School standards in Pendle: There has been a 5% increase in the number of 11 year olds in Lancashire schools reaching the expected level in reading and writing and a 9% increase in those reaching maths standards in the last year alone.

Tax: 3,655 working families with children in Pendle are benefiting from

more follows

the Working Families Tax credit, guaranteeing an income of at least £214 per week for full time work. No family with earnings of less than £235 per week in Pendle will pay any net income tax from October this year. 25,198 working people in Pendle received a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax this year.

Child benefit: Child Benefit has risen to £15 per week for the eldest child compared with £11.40p in 1997, helping 12,300 families in Pendle. Child Benefit for each subsequent child has risen to £10.

Jobs: The number of young people on the dole in Pendle has fallen by 50% since May 1997 and over the same period long term unemployment in Pendle is down by 71%.

Pensioners: At least 3,000 of the least well off pensioners in Pendle will benefit from the Minimum Income Guarantee which means £78.45p a week for single pensioners and £121.95p for pensioner couples. All 16,259 pensioners in Pendle will benefit from the winter fuel allowance of £150 - paid to all households with someone over 60. And from 1 November, at least 6,504 pensioners in Pendle over 75 will get a free TV licence worth £104 a year

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 89/00 Wednesday 12 April 2000

COATES LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the decision by Lancashire County Council to spend £23,000 to refurbish and extend the toilets at Coates Lane Primary School in Barnoldswick - the town where the MP lives.

In a letter to the Chair of Governors, Mrs Oldfield, the MP said he was delighted that the work was to be carried out. She had earlier thanked him for his support in getting the toilets regarded as a priority.

The MP said: “Coates Lane is a splendid school and the staff and Governors have been pressing for these improvements for some time.”

“The environment in which learning takes place is very important and that is why the Government is determined to tackle the decades of neglect which has left us with a huge backlog of repairs and improvements which have to be carried out.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 90/00 Thursday 13 April 2000

CLASS SIZES PLEDGE BRINGS CASH TO PENDLE SCHOOLS

Education Secretary, David Blunkett, has announced a big injection of cash into Pendle schools as part of the Government’s drive to cut infant class sizes.

Capital funding for new classrooms in local schools goes to Laneshawbridge Primary which gets £109,365; Blacko Primary (£47,500) and Christ Church CE Primary in Colne (£53,063).

In addition Lancashire Education Authority gets a revenue allocation of £4,207,875 - enough for 203 extra teachers, county wide.

Responding to the news, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "The early years are so important. Getting infant class sizes down is immensely important. This extra cash will make a real difference in Pendle."

Note to Editors: Education Secretary, David Blunkett, wrote to the Pendle MP on 12 April as follows: "I thought that you would be interested to know that we are announcing today details of funding allocations made to all Local Education Authorities to enable them to continue to implement the infant class size initiative. I enclose information on both revenue and capital allocations for each Local Education Authority with details of the number of teachers and classrooms funded.

"I am sure that you will agree that the details of the grant we are announcing today will be welcome news for schools, parents, teachers and pupils. It will help to ensure that as few as 3% (around 50,000) of 5, 6 and 7 year olds will remain in large infant classes by this September.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 91/00 Monday 17 April 2000

COST OF FALKLANDS GARRISON IS £884,675 PER ISLANDER

Billions of pounds have been spent maintaining the British garrison in the Falklands since the end of the war with Argentina eighteen years ago. The cost of the garrison works out at £884,675 for each one of the Island's 2,558 residents.

During questions in the Commons this afternoon, Defence Minister, John Spellar, told Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, that the cost of maintaining a garrison on the Falklands Islands last year came to £69 million. £2,263 million has been spent on the garrison since the restoration of democratic government in Argentina.

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "£65 million is five times the annual budget of my own local authority in Pendle. I could well understand keeping an army presence in the Falklands if there were still a brutal dictatorship in Argentina but these days are long gone and democracy was restored years ago. All the political parties are committed to a peaceful resolution of the territorial claim. Indeed the Prime Minister and the Argentine President elect met in Paris at the Socialist

International Congress on 8 November and agreed to continue to talk about the future of the Islands with a view to a peaceful resolution of the sovereignty dispute."

"We hear much about army overstretch and I wonder if this is a sensible use of resources. We are talking here about huge sums of money being spent in the South Atlantic."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 92/00 Tuesday 18 April 2000

LORDS PLAN "BIZARRE" says PRENTICE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has dubbed the Government's plan to reform the House of Lords as "bizarre".

In Commons questions this afternoon to the Leader of the House of Commons, the MP slated the plan to appoint members to the upper chamber. He called for a small directly elected Lords instead.

The Deputy Leader of the House, Paddy Tipping told the MP that the Prime Minister was shortly to appoint the new chair of the Appointments Commission, which will in turn appoint peers. The Pendle MP quipped: "So, the Prime Minister appoints the chair of the Appointments Commission, which in turn appoints members to the upper chamber. Isn't this just a bizarre state of affairs. Appointment is very much second best to election."

"What we need as we go into the next general election is for the Labour Party and the Labour Government to nail its colours to the mast and argue vigorously for a small directly-elected second chamber, rather than this ridiculous melange that we are invited to accept at the moment".

Speaking after the exchange the Pendle MP said: "The Government has come up with a real dog's breakfast for the new Upper Chamber. We are supposed to be a modernising Government yet we have come up with this old stale system of patronage."

"We've got to go back to the drawing board. This won't wash."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 92/00 Wednesday 19 April 2000

MP's RECYCLING BILL MOVES STEP NEARER TO BECOMING LAW

A Bill introduced by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, to force newspaper publishers to increase the amount of recycled newsprint in their publications completed its Committee stage in the Commons this morning. The Bill will now return to the Commons Chamber for the report stage - probably in June.

Speaking after the Committee session, the MP said: "In the last 24 hours the Government and the Newspaper Publishers Association came forward with a draft heads of agreement which will commit the NPA to delivering on some pretty tough targets. I haven't seen the details although we had assurances from the Minister, Chris Mullin, that they will stand scrutiny. In the meantime, my Bill continues its progress through Parliament and it keeps the pressure on. A voluntary approach may work but my Bill would force the NPA to meet targets which most people who know about the subject agree are achievable."

The Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill - will ensure newspaper and magazine publishers collect and recycle 65% of the volume of the paper they put on the market by 2016, with 2 interim targets.
The 65% target is in line with the landfill directive which requires the UK to reduce household biodegradable waste, such as paper, going to landfill by 65% by 2016. It would also lead to increased funds for local authority recycling, essential if constituents are to have quality recycling schemes.

The Bill would also ensure that newspapers contain more recycled paper - 80% by 2010, again with two interim targets.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Re April 2000

CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL USE TO BE GIVEN THE GO-AHEAD PREDICTS PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is predicting that the medical use of cannabis will be given the go ahead soon by the Government. The MP has been a long time campaigner to return the drug to the medicine chest. It could be prescribed lawfully by doctors prior to the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act.

In a written answer to a Parliamentary Question tabled by the MP, Health Minister, Gisela Stuart, said: "The Medicines Control Agency (MCA) has approved an application to conduct a clinical trial with a cannabis-based medicine. The timing of the trial is a matter for the applicant. The purpose of the trial that has been approved is to demonstrate safety and efficacy in a limited number of subjects, and to establish the necessary dosage regimen and delivery mechanisms to provide the most effective relief to sufferers of multiple sclerosis and other neurological disorders."

She continued: "Evidence from clinical trials of safety quality and efficacy of a medicine is part of the information that is assessed by the MCA in coming to a decision about whether a product should be licensed for marketing in the United Kingdom. If a marketing authorisation were to be issued by the MCA, we would seek to modify the current Misuse of Drugs Act controls on the use of cannabis."

Gordon Prentice commented: "This is great news. We are slowly but surely getting there. People whose ill health has made them turn to cannabis face risks. Conventional drugs have to be manufactured to a strict quality standard. Clearly, this doesn't apply when people are forced to buy cannabis the street."

Note to Editors: The following article written by the Pendle MP appeared in the Independent on Sunday on 5 October 1997: *more follows*

CANNABIS FOR MEDICAL USE TO BE GIVEN GO AHEAD

In July this year the British Medical Association voted overwhelmingly for cannabis products to be made available for medical use, if this happens it will simply return us to the position which applied before 1973, when the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act came into force, outlawing medical use of the drug.

Before then doctors could prescribe cannabis which was often dispensed in tincture form, like cough mixture.

Later this month the BMA's Board of Science will, it is believed, recommend wider use of the drug. This will reflect opinion within the profession which is moving sharply in favour of legalisation for medical use, The BMA magazine's Doctors Decide Panel of over 100 hospital doctors and GPs wants cannabis to be available on prescription. In an article in the BMA News Review earlier this year, 78 per cent of hospital doctors and three in five GPs agreed that the drug should be available for therapeutic purposes.

There is no doubt in my mind that cannabis and cannabis derivatives can help people cope with a variety of medical conditions.

The drug has for centuries been regarded as having therapeutic value even if, these days, its efficacy is challenged. There is masses of anecdotal evidence from people suffering from MS, for example, which backs the claim that the drug really works. It can help reduce tremors and spasms

and ease movement. Some people with Aids say it improves their appetite. It can help in the treatment of glaucoma.

Tragically, because its medical use is unlawful it makes research much more difficult than it need be because a special Home Office licence is needed for any drug trial.

Despite this, in 1995, the previous government was forced to lessen the controls on dronabinol, one of the active ingredients of cannabis, after the World Health Organisation recommended that this derivative had therapeutic value as an anti-emetic for patients undergoing chemotherapy for cancer.

The Misuse of Drugs Act puts cannabis in Schedule 1 - drugs subject to the strictest controls on the grounds that they have allegedly little or no medical value and cause social problems through misuse. Besides cannabis, the list includes LSD, mescaline, raw opium and coca leaf.

There is a powerful case for taking cannabis into the Schedule 2 list of controlled drugs with medical use, such as morphine, methadone and amphetamines, allowing qualified doctors lawfully to prescribe drugs that they believe will benefit patients.

Gordon PRENTICE is MP for Pendle in Lancashire and secretary of the All Party MS Group.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 52/00 Wednesday 26 April 2000

ROYAL TRAIN UNDERUSED says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, wants the Royal Train put to work just like the rest of the nation's trains. The MP says It spends most of its time sitting in a siding. He wants concerted efforts should be made to put it to use when it is not being used by the royal family - which is most of the time.

Last week, the MP pressed Transport Minster, Keith Hill, for details on how often the train had been hired out since 1998. The Minister told the MP: "The Train has been used once for official Government business since 1998 - for a function hosted by Mrs. Blair for the wives of the G8 Heads of Government on 16 May 1998. The Train including sleeping cars has not been hired out to any commercial undertakings during this period. The Train is available for use by Government departments and appropriate organisations, on a reimbursable basis."

The MP said: "In theory it is available for hire, but in practice it rarely happens. British Rail used to urge us to "Let the Train Take the Strain". But unlike the rest of the nation's trains, the Royal Train has a pretty easy life. It never works up a steam!"

In 1996, the MP courted controversy when he claimed the Royal train was a luxury the nation could no longer afford. Figures unearthed then by the MP showed that it cost £136.30p per mile to run. The Royal Train - which is now operated by the

American company, Wisconsin Central - is kept at a secure location in Buckinghamshire when it is not being used. The train is serviced by no less than 11 full time and 4 part time staff.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 96/00 Wednesday 26 April 2000

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR COUNCIL TAX RE-THINK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for a review of the Council Tax to address the "Band A issue" - the huge number of properties in East Lancashire which fall in band A, the lowest.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "Pendle has the highest percentage of Band A properties in East Lancashire and, probably, the entire country. We have 24,427 band A properties or 64.8% of the total. Yet we have only 48 band H properties (worth over £320,000) compared with Westminster City Council which has 11,385 Band H houses."

"The argument for having another band, lower than band A, is, I think, compelling."

The MP added: "The present set-up can be unfair. I shall be raising this issue with Ministers."

Number of dwellings in bands A-H as at 15 October 1999

	Band A	Band A	Band H	Band H
	Number	% of the total	Number	% of the total
Ribble Valley	3,022	13.2	181	0.8
Pendle	24,427	64.8	48	0.1
Blackburn with Darwen	36,692	62.8	63	0.1
Burnley	26, 184	64.5	17	0.04
Rossendale	15,613	54	39	0.1
Hyndburn	21,624	61.3	12	0.03

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 97/00 Monday 1 May 2000

PENDLE MP TELLS MAY DAY RALLY HE WILL VOTE AGAINST AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SELL-OFF

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has pledged to vote against the Government on the proposed sell-off of air traffic control.

The key votes in the Commons will be the week after next, but he told crowds at Burnley's May Day rally at Townley Park today that his mind was made up. Harking back to Labour's pre-election position, the MP said: "Our air is not for sale."

Deputy Prime Minster, John Prescott, is to speak to Labour MPs on Wednesday at the next meeting of the PLP in a bid to secure their support for the controversial policy.

The MP said: "We are told we need to do it because it will cost a billion pounds over ten years to re-equip and modernise NATS. (National Air Traffic Services - or air traffic control). That's £100m a year. Peanuts."

The MP continued: "The sale of the radio spectrum for mobile phones a week ago brought in £22 billion. The fact is the country is awash with cash and we should tell the Chancellor he should spend it and not put it in the bank!"

"I heard this morning on the radio the latest big idea in the modernisation of the NHS to come out of Downing Street is to put people recuperating after an operation into private nursing homes where there are beds. My big idea is to put more beds into the NHS."

"We could help the pensioners by linking pensions with earnings.

more follows:

PENDLE MP TELLS MAY DAY RALLY HE WILL VOTE AGAINST AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SELL-OFF

It can be done. We've done it before. We have already decided to link the Minimum Income Guarantee to earnings for the least well off pensioners. We should link pensions to earnings for all pensioners."

“We should spend and not bank this £22bn windfall on regenerating and renovating housing - especially in East Lancashire where so much is falling down around our ears. And I want to see the Government support our manufacturing industry. We can’t all get jobs selling each other insurance or cutting each other’s hair.”

The MP highlighted the gap between the richest and the poorest in Britain. He said it was, if anything, getting wider.

• The richest 1% here in Britain own 17% of the nation’s wealth - one fifth.

• Half the population owns 93% of the nation’s wealth

• the other half owns 7%

The MP also poked fun at veteran Liberal campaigner, Tony Greaves, who takes his seat in the House of Lords next Monday as Lord Greaves of Pendle. The MP predicted Greaves would be wearing “a little yellow woollen coronet” as he is sworn in. The MP said the Lords was a by-word for patronage and cronyism and should be swept away as is now stands.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 98/00 Thursday 26 April 2000

THE HIGH COST OF PAYING TO KEEP WARM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is battling to keep down heating costs. Shock statistics unearthed by the MP shows that people who pay for their electricity or gas using a pre-payment meter are paying way over the odds. The MP says that people who have the least are expected to pay the most when it comes to heating bills.

The MP asked DTI Minister, Helen Liddell, what was the annual amount spent by the average consumer on gas and electricity where payment was by a pre-payment meter and direct debit. He was concerned about heating bills in his chilly East Lancashire constituency.

The statistics showed that people who paid for their gas by meter paid on average £51 a year more - £318 compared with £267 for those who could afford to pay their gas bills by monthly direct debit. For electricity the difference was £26. Direct debit was £256 and pre-payment meter £282.

The MP commented: “The system clearly works against those who are less well off. I am asking Ministers to look again at the whole payment regime.”

Average UK domestic fuel bills 1999 provisional estimates

payment method	Standard quarterly credit	Monthly direct debit	pre-payment meter
gas	£305	£267	£318
electricity	£265	£256	£282

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 99/00 Monday 1 May 2000

GOVERNMENT POISED TO OUTLAW MYSTERY BACKERS IN DEFAMATION CASES

The Government is poised to change the law to prevent mystery backers bankrolling libel actions says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. This tackles head-on litigants such as the disgraced former Tory MP, Neil Hamilton, who faces a £500,000 costs order against him.

The former MP faces total costs of the order of £2 million. At the High Court last month, Mr Justice Morland stayed an order made against Lord Harris of High Cross - one of Hamilton’s principal backers - ordering him to name those who contributed more than £5,000 to Hamilton’s fighting fund.

In a written PQ, the Pendle MP asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department, David Lock MP, in how many failed libel actions brought since 1995 the litigant has refused to disclose to the court the identities of those who helped finance the action so that costs could be recovered; what steps the court had taken in each case.

The Minister replied: “The Lord Chancellor's Department does not keep statistics of libel cases which fail and in which the litigant has refused to disclose to the court the source of those who helped to finance the action. It is not possible to keep records of the costs outcomes of libel cases because many cases do not reach trial but are settled by agreement. In settled cases the court will not be privy to the arrangement on

costs." But the Minister added: "The question of financial support for defamation proceedings will be addressed in a consultation paper to be issued by my Department in the near future."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 100/00 Wednesday 3 May 2000

PENDLE MP TELLS STUDENTS "ELECT THE LORDS!"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be urging students at Durham University this Friday to join him in his campaign to secure an elected House of Lords.

Known for his controversial views, the MP was invited by the Durham Union Society to propose the motion: "This House believes in an Elected House of Lords" in this year's major Union debate.

Supporting him is his Labour colleague from the Commons, former Welsh Office Minister, Win Griffiths. Opposing the proposition are the blue blooded aristocrats, The Earl Onslow and The Lord Rowallan. Students will join in the debate.

The MP said: "I am looking forward to this immensely. Students can be a difficult audience - having been one myself I know. But, this time, I am on the side of the angels. Any custard pies will, I hope, be thrown at their lordships."

The Pendle MP is an enthusiastic campaigner for an elected Lords. Last month he told the Commons the Government should nail its colours to the mast and argue vigorously for a small directly-elected second chamber, "rather than this ridiculous melange that we are invited to accept at the moment". People, he said, are fed up with the stale system of patronage.

Friday's debate is topical. On Monday 8 May, the veteran Liberal, Tony Greaves, enters Parliament as Lord Greaves of Pendle. Mr Greaves stood for election to Westminster in Pendle in May 1997.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

For Immediate Release. No 101/00 Thursday 11 May 2000

MP GUIDES GIBFIELD

Pupils and staff of Gibfield School in Colne got a taste of Westminster yesterday when local MP Gordon Prentice took them on a tour of the House of Commons. Whilst conducting the tour the MP explained to them the procedures of law making.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said: “I thoroughly enjoyed taking the students from Gibfield School around Westminster. We talked about lots of parliamentary issues including homework, a subject which was close to their hearts!”

For Immediate Release. No 101/00 Monday 8 May 2000

PENDLE MP URGES CHURCH TO BAN HUNTING ON ITS LAND

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today told the Church of England to get off the fence and ban hunting with hounds on its land.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP clashed with Stuart Bell MP who speaks for the Church Commissioners. The Church of England currently allows tenants to decide for themselves whether to allow hunting on land they rent from the Church.

The Pendle MP told the Commons the position of the Church was "very disappointing". He continued: “Why does the Church sit on the fence on this very controversial issue. The Church of England is the third largest land owner in the country and yet it prevaricates.”

"Is the Church really neutral on this issue of killing for fun. Is it OK to kill for fun?" he asked.

Stuart Bell replied: "The Commissioners recognise that inside the Church and out there are widely held and varying, strongly held views on this subject, all of which deserve respect. However, we have existing tenancies which may not be altered unilaterally, it may be possible to make provisions in new tenancies but the enforcement of a ban on hunting is difficult and could undermine our relationships with tenants."

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: “I expected more from the Church. They have taken a very half hearted line saying it may be possible to look at new tenancies but not existing ones.”

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 101/00 Thursday 11 May 2000

MP GUIDES GIBFIELD

Pupils and staff of Gibfield School in Colne got a taste of Westminster yesterday when local MP Gordon Prentice took them on a tour of the House of Commons. Whilst conducting the tour the MP explained to them the procedures of law making.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said: "I thoroughly enjoyed taking the students from Gibfield School around Westminster. We talked about lots of parliamentary issues including homework, a subject which was close to their hearts!"

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 102/00 Thursday May 11 2000

PENDLE MP PRESSES FOR SUBSIDY IF REQUIRED TO KEEP VILLAGE POST OFFICES OPEN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon pressed Industry Minister, Alan Johnson, to subsidise small village post offices - if that was the only way to keep them open.

In the Commons exchange, the MP wanted to know what estimate the Government had made of the levels of subsidy that would be required to safeguard the future of post offices in small towns and villages and in rural areas.

The Minister told the Pendle MP: "It is too early to assume that subsidy would be the right way forward. The Government's key target is a viable commercial future for the post office network. The Government is using the opportunity of the Post Office Bill

to propose taking the necessary powers to keep open the option of financial assistance."

Speaking afterwards, Gordon Prentice said: "No-one who currently gets their benefit or pension paid in cash over the counter at their local Post Office will be forced to change. But clearly our post offices have got to generate an income stream and that is most easily done by getting people over the threshold and into the shop. The Performance and Innovation Unit at the Cabinet Office is currently preparing a report on this and I am eagerly awaiting its publication."

The MP added: "I want to do everything I can to safeguard the future of our local Post Offices. It is a staggering fact that 10% of all rural Post Offices closed between 1990 and 1997."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 103/00 Thursday 11 May 2000

A56 BY-PASS SCHEME SHELVED

After months of debate Lancashire County Council has finally decided to press ahead with the Heysham - M6 link in preference to the construction of the A56 Village By-pass. The decision follows extensive public consultation on the road proposals.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "Now that the decision has been made, I want to see the County Council roll up its sleeves and get down to work on much needed local improvements. The traffic lights on North Valley Road which cause traffic to back up could, I believe, be replaced with roundabouts. Relatively simple, straight-forward and low cost measures should now be put in place. I shall be pressing for swift action."

Note to Editors: Lancashire County Council's General Purposes Sub Committee at its meeting on 10 May carried the following recommendations on the County's Local Transport Plan Major Schemes:

(1) The Major Scheme to be included in the Local Transport Plan 2001-06 should be a single carriageway Heysham-M6 link at an estimated cost Of £55.6 million; (2) The A56 Village Bypasses and the Ormskirk Bypass scheme be agreed as a joint second priority and the environment Director be asked to continue with the preparation of these schemes including the carrying out of consultations and the obtaining of all necessary permissions and approvals; (3) Continued protection for the Penwortham Bypass be considered as part of the structure plan review; (4) Local improvements in Colne be considered in the Local Transport Plan period; (5) No further work on the Park Road/County Road Link, Ormskirk, be undertaken; (6) Bearing in mind the Government's continued emphasis. on road

safety and the recently published casualty reduction targets for the period to 2010, the Environment Director be requested:-
to continue he ongoing discussions an the Lancashire Road Safety Project with relevant Government departments with a view to the initiative being progressed as soon as possible....

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

No 104/00 **EMBARGOED UNTIL SATURDAY 13 MAY 2000**

PENDLE MP IN NEW MOVE TO OUTLAW FOX HUNTING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is leading a new move to ban hunting with hounds. The right to roam campaigner has put forward an amendment to the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill. The Bill is currently being considered by a Commons Standing Committee.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I am totally opposed to killing for fun and that is what fox hunting is all about."

The Commons has already voted once since the General Election to ban hunting with hounds. In November 1998 the Commons gave a second reading to Michael Foster's Private Member's Bill by 411 votes to 157 but arcane Parliamentary procedures torpedoed it.”

The MP continued: "Clearly we need a Government Bill to be the vehicle for getting this measure on to the Statute Book. There is little point willing the end without willing the means."

“We have got to ban this barbaric blood sport before the next General Election, otherwise our credibility will be shot to pieces. The Prime Minister's personal commitment to a ban is spot on."

Notes to Editors: On 12 April at Prime Minister's Questions, the PM reaffirmed his commitment to a ban on fox hunting. Asked whether a ban would be brought in, he said: "Let us be quite clear. The views of this House are already well known and so are mine." On BBC Question Time on 8 July 1999, the PM promised a vote to ban fox hunting. "It will be banned - as soon as we possibly can.” In September 1999 he told BBC's Breakfast with Frost: "We will give MPs a chance to vote. I am personally against fox hunting." 2. The Countryside Bill is currently in Committee. The Bill amends the law relating to countryside access and rights of way and offers new protection for wildlife and nature conservation.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 105/00 Thursday 11 May 2000

PENDLE MP IN BID TO CUT POWER OF WHIPS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, to respond to the controversial and ground breaking report of the Liaison Committee - comprising the Chairs of all the Commons Select Committees - which recommended unanimously that appointments to select committees should be removed from the control of the whips and given to a panel drawn from the Chairs of the committees themselves.

Margaret Beckett told the House that the report was "weighty and far reaching" and had to be considered carefully. The Pendle MP quipped that it was a mere 23 pages long and had been out for more than two months. The MP told the Minister the report was hugely significant because it addressed directly the relationship between Parliament and the Executive.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "Parliament shouldn't be regarded as a door mat by the Government of the day - whatever its political complexion."

Note to Editors: A Commons motion (EDM 476) tabled by the MP has attracted the support of 203 MPs from all parties although a clear majority are Labour. The motion reads: This House warmly welcomes the first report of the Liaison Committee, published on 2 March, which observes that the membership of select committees is effectively under the control of the whips and that this has led on occasion to long delays is setting up select committees at the start of a Parliament and in replacing members thereafter and that members have been kept off select committees because of their views; agrees that this is wrong in principle; and believes the implementation of the report's recommendations would strengthen parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive to the positive benefit of both.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 106/00 Monday 15 May 2000

LINK PENSIONS WITH EARNINGS says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Commons this afternoon that pensioners want the link with earnings restored. He told MPs that in current year if pensions had been linked to earnings the pension would have increased by £2.85p rather than 75p.

The MP told Social Security Minister, Jeff Rooker: "The poorest pensioners on the Minimum Income Guarantee will have their pensions linked to earnings but what about the rest?" The Government envisages a 2% real terms annual increase in pensions over the next ten years for all the others.

The MP said that with the MIG and the new Pensions Tax Credit the Government was in danger of means testing an ever larger number of pensioners.

The Minister said the Government's policy was to target the least well off pensioners through the MIG but it recognised the difficulties faced by those whose income was just above the qualifying threshold. Ministers were now turning their attention to this important group.

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "The Government has already done a huge amount for pensioners but restoring the link with earnings - which the Conservatives broke in 1981 - would, more than anything else, convince pensioners that the Labour Government was on their side."

He added: "The Conservatives are the pensioners fair weather friends. How they have the brass neck to go on about pensioner poverty beats me. They broke the link in the first place."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 107/00 Wednesday 17 May 2000

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle in April and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,575 (1,573 in March) - an unemployment rate of 4.6%. There were 1,180 men and 395 women out of work. The corresponding figures in March were respectively 1,161 and 412.

Nationally, the claimant count is down 28,800 to 1,112,000, or 3.9% of the workforce. Employment has hit another new record and now stands at 27,820,000.

Commenting on the figures, Gordon Prentice MP said: “Unemployment nationally has fallen to its lowest level in 20 years. Here in Pendle the number of young people on the dole has fallen by 50% since May 1997 and over the same period long term unemployment in Pendle is down by 71%. This is good news but we need to make every effort to maintain this trend.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 108/00 Wednesday 17 May 2000

MP SAYS ASYLUM APPLICATIONS WILL BE TREATED FAIRLY AND QUICKLY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today pledged that people seeking asylum in Britain from persecution in their country of origin will be treated fairly and quickly under the new procedures introduced by the Government last month.

The new set up involves the dispersal of asylum seekers away from London and Kent (the overwhelming majority arrive at Dover, Gatwick or Heathrow) to other areas of the country while their applications are processed. The aim is to get the period between the asylum application being lodged and processed down to two months.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The new system has to bed down and it obviously has had its teething problems and we shall be looking at these. But the Government is absolutely determined to bring some coherence to the shambles we inherited.”

The MP added: “People fleeing persecution have always found a safe haven in Britain and that is no different today than it was in the thirties when Jewish people were fleeing from the Nazis. But we also have a responsibility to make decisions quickly and fairly on who, we believe, has the right to stay here.”

In March last year the Government set out its policy of dispersal of asylum seekers to areas where there were vacant properties and where there were already established multi-cultural communities.

The MP concluded: “Genuine asylum seekers - often fleeing

more follows

murderous regimes - deserve our compassion and support.”

Note to Editors: The facts about asylum

• The number of asylum applications lodged in 1999 (71,160) was 55% higher than that lodged in the previous year (46,015).

• There were 32,300 decisions (including backlog clearance cases) taken over the past 12 months - a 2% increase on decisions during 1999 (31,570).

• The increase in applications reflects increased instability world-wide; the comparative ease and cheapness of international travel; a lack of economic opportunities in some countries; an increase in the activities of criminal gangs in organising illegal immigration, and a growing awareness of what the developed world has to offer.

• The UK is not alone in experiencing a substantial increase in asylum applicants. Statistics produced recently by UNHCR suggests that Belgium (63%) Hungary (55%) Austria (46%) and France (34%) have been similarly affected.

• Although, according to the UNHCR estimates, the UK is second only to Germany in numbers of applications received, it is sixth when assessed in terms of applicants per thousand of population.

What the Government is doing

'The new Immigration and Asylum Act is designed to speed up the asylum system, crack down on unscrupulous, immigration advisers and introduce a streamlined system of visitor appeals. Key measures in the Act include:

• creating a single, comprehensive right of appeal to speed up the system and help to deliver most initial asylum decisions within two months and most appeals in a further four months. An additional £120m over the next three years and the recruitment of hundreds more staff support this commitment.

• Introducing new Home Office led support arrangements with limited cash payments to reduce the incentive for economic migrants. Accommodation will be provided on a no-choice basis in regional cluster areas to relieve the current pressure on London and the South East.

• Creating a new civil penalty for drivers of vehicles found to contain clandestine entrants at £2,000 per illegal entrant.

• Improving the quality of advice available to applicants by regulating immigration advisers.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 109/00 Wednesday 17 May 2000

MP PASSES JUDGEMENT ON LAZY JUDGES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has passed sentence on judges who take forever to deliver their judgements following the end of a trial. He say they should be put in the dock - or have their pay docked - on the grounds that justice delayed is justice denied.

The MP asked a Law Minister on how many occasions since May 1997 the Lord Chancellor (Lord Irvine) had cause to reprimand or to take other action about the length of time taken by a judge to deliver judgement following the end of a trial.

The Minister, Jane Kennedy, said: “The Lord Chancellor, as Head of the Judiciary, deals with allegations of judicial misconduct. There have been two occasions where retrials have been necessary because of judicial delay. The Lord Chancellor decided in both to make ex gratia awards of compensation in respect of costs incurred. On both occasions the Judge had resigned or retired. On a third occasion the Lord Chancellor agreed with the Lord Chief Justice that a Judge should be released from sitting to enable him to complete a number of outstanding judgements. On a fourth occasion the Vice Chancellor issued a rebuke and warning following a delay which was severely criticised by the Court of Appeal. The Lord Chancellor wrote to the Judge, supporting the Vice Chancellor's action. The Lord Chancellor and the senior judiciary are working to put systems in place to ensure that if there is any possibility of undue delay in the delivery of a judgement, that is identified early and remedial action taken.”

The Pendle MP said: “Judges are not above the law - although they dispense it. There is simply no excuse for monstrous delays.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 111/00 Wednesday 17 May 2000

MP WELCOMES FALL IN HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the fall in NHS waiting lists. The new figures mean waiting lists have fallen by 100,000.

The East Lancashire Health Authority recorded a drop Of 789, (or 6%), since March 1997. The fall from March 1998 - March 2000 was 2,955 - or 19%.

Across England, waiting lists are now 121,000 below the figure Labour inherited in 1997. The end of March in-patient waiting list figures show a fall of 51,000 (4.7%) compared with the February figures.

The number of out-patients waiting over 13 weeks has fallen for the second quarter in succession; down by 94,000 (19%) this quarter. The number of waiting list operations carried out by the NHS is up 12% this year, compared with 1997. The NHS now provides 70% of patients with their operation within 3 months, 80% within 6 months.

For the first time ever, in-patient and out-patient waiting figures have both fallen over a full year. This year in-patient and out-patient waiting figures are both down - in-patients by over 35,000 and out-patients by over 50,000. By contrast, in the last year of the previous Government both inpatients and outpatients figures rose in patients by 110,000 and out patients by 31,000.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: “I say well done to everyone who works for our local NHS. It is great news.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 112/00 Thursday 25 May 2000

EDGE END STUDENTS DEBATE THEIR WAY TO THIRD PLACE

Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP presenting certificates at Edge End High School, Nelson, Friday 26 May at 10.15am

Local MP Gordon Prentice, has been invited to Edge End High School this Friday to present the students who entered the Motorola Youth Parliament Competition with their certificates. The school made a video of a debate at the House of Commons with pupils taking on the role of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and many of the MPs. The result of the competition was announced recently and the school were thrilled to learn that they had attained third place.

The MP said: "What a marvellous achievement! The Year 8 pupils from Edge End were in competition with schools throughout the North West. Some of the students they were up against were a great deal older so the Edge End pupils should be very proud of themselves. They fully deserve this very creditable third place."

Note to Editor: The MP visited the school in March, before the video was recorded, to listen to the debate and pass on his advice on how realistic the session was.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 113/00 Thursday 25 May 2000

HUNTING WITH DOGS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be explaining why he is campaigning in Parliament for a ban on hunting with dogs in this weekend's edition of "On the Record"
"On the Record" goes out on Sunday at 12 noon on BBC 1.

The Pendle MP has tabled an amendment to the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill which is likely to return to the Commons for the report stage in the week beginning 12 June.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 114/00 Monday 5 June 2000

GIVE NAVY SHIPBUILDERS SOME ORDERS says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, came to the aid of beleaguered shipyards when he quizzed Defence Ministers in the Commons this afternoon on the Government's policy on ordering new ships for the Royal Navy.

The MP also wondered why not a single warship had been ordered for construction over the past three years. He told the Commons: "And why are we are flogging off at a knock-down price ships that are perfectly serviceable, that were only commissioned maybe 12 or 13 years ago?"

Defence Minister, John Spellar, told the MP - who represents a landlocked constituency on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border: "The life of each vessel is planned carefully at the design and procure-ment stage; but requirements do change over the course of a ship's life and we must maintain an affordable front line capability to meet the current and predicted strategic requirement."

The Minister said the Strategic Defence Review had altered the need for major surface ships but that contracts for warships would be awarded later this year. The Minister confirmed that the Government had already awarded the design contracts for the two new aircraft carriers.

Speaking after the exchange, the MP said: "Shipbuilding is a core part of our manufacturing base. We are a maritime nation."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 115/00 Monday 5 June 2000

MP QUIZZES MINISTER ON ROLLS ROYCE PLANS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has quizzed Industry Minister, Alan Johnson, on the future plans of Rolls Royce - one of Pendle's biggest employers. Over recent months, workers from Rolls Royce in Barlick and from all over the country have been discussing changes in work patterns that RR are currently implementing. There is widespread concern about the company's plans.

The Pendle MP asked the Minister when he last met representatives of Rolls Royce to discuss the aero engine industry, with particular reference to employment levels. The MP also wanted to know what conditions were attached to the most recent tranche of launch aid for Rolls Royce.

Alan Johnson told the MP today: "I visited Rolls-Royce's main production facilities at Derby on 9 May 2000 and discussed a range of issues of importance to the competitiveness of the company. We discussed the implications for employment levels of Rolls-Royce's current review of its strategic operations."

The Minister added: "In November 1997 the Government agreed to provide launch investment of £200m to RR to assist with the development of the Trent series of large aero engines. The conditions attached to the agreement are commercially confidential. Launch investments is a risk and revenues sharing Government investment in the design and development of specific civil aerospace projects in the UK. The investment is not a grant and is repayable to the Government at a real rate of return, usually via levies on sales of the product developed."

Gordon Prentice said: "I shall be meeting John Rose, the Chief Executive of RR, later this month. There is a lot to talk about."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 116/00 Tuesday 6 June 2000

MP TO QUIZ MINISTERS ON ASYLUM POLICY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to quiz Ministers on the operation of the Government's new asylum dispersal policy. Local authorities such as Pendle claim they have been kept in the dark about plans.

The MP is seeking an urgent meeting with the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to see how the system can be improved.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The numbers of asylum seekers allocated to any given area are very small indeed. So things can and should work very smoothly indeed if the one hand knows what the other is doing. Unfortunately, that has not been our experience so far in Pendle. I want to see a fast and efficient assessment of all claims for asylum.”

The MP added: “There are teething troubles and we’ve got get to grips with them. These systems should have been put in place years ago - by the previous Government.”

“The legitimate concerns that people have about the workings of the new system will not, I hope, be used as a cover for racist comments. Here in Pendle we are playing our part in a national scheme and we want to make it work.”

Note to Editors: In a letter dated 25 May, the Home Office Minister wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: “As you will be aware the National Asylum support service (NASS) began providing support for destitute asylum seekers and their dependants from 3 April. From this date NASS became responsible for those who claimed asylum at their port of entry and from 17 April they also assumed responsibility for those who claimed on or after this day in the United Kingdom while in Kent, The new support arrangements include the dispersal away from London and the South East because it is the local authorities in these areas that to date have had to bear a disproportionate burden in supporting and accommodating asylum seekers, In the circumstances I thought it may be helpful to let you know

more follows

the areas that we have identified as suitable cluster areas in which to accommodate asylum seekers for April, May and June. These clusters will, if necessary, continue to be used after this period and will be supplemented by other clusters in due course.

Under the Immigration and Asylum Act destitute asylum seekers and their dependants are dispersed on a no choice basis to cluster areas in various parts of the United Kingdom. Ideally, these areas are and will be where there is suitable and available accommodation; and where it would be possible to link with existing communities and to develop the support of voluntary and community groups. The main aim is that no one area bears a disproportionate number of asylum seekers.

The enclosed document shows potential cluster areas for the first three months of the new arrangements. Some of the areas listed have already received asylum seekers and their dependants. We are developing the clusters on the basis of language and where possible will be taking advantage of the multi cultural make up of different areas and existing community and voluntary support. The number of clusters will, of course, expand as more clusters are identified and come on stream.

Note 2 to Editors: The initial cluster areas are:

South West: Bristol, Gloucester, Swindon, Taunton and Bridgwater, Exeter,

South Gloucestershire, Torbay, Plymouth, North Somerset and Bath.

South Central: Portsmouth.

Kent/Essex: Brighton and Hove, Hastings and St Leonards.

East of England: Ipswich, Norwich, Cambridge, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Peterborough, Bury St Edmunds.

East: Newcastle, Middlesborough, Sunderland, North Tyneside, Gateshead, South Tyneside, Stockton on Tees.

East Midlands: Leicester, Derby, Nottingham.

West Midlands: Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Stoke on Trent.

North West: Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Nelson, Wigan, Burnley.

Yorkshire: Sheffield, Bradford, Leeds, Rotherham, Wakefield, Hull, Doncaster, Halifax, Huddersfield, Barnsley, Grimsby.

Scotland: Glasgow, Edinburgh.

Wales: Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Wrexham, Bridgend.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 118/00 Tuesday 6 June 2000

MP SEEKS ASSURANCES ON MOBILE PHONE TRANSMITTER MASTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is seeking assurances from the Government that mobile phone transmitter masts are completely safe and pose no threat whatsoever to human health. The MP has been pressing the Department of Health for the past year for robust data which confirms their safety - or otherwise. The Government is now to issue new guidance on these masts.

Recent press reports have pointed to a transmitter mast in Barnoldswick suggesting it is a threat to health.

The MP said: “For over a year I have been assured by Ministers there was and is no danger whatsoever but I am determined to get into the public domain all the relevant information.”

Today the MP asked Environment Minister Beverley Hughes what powers were available to planning authorities to regulate siting, appearance and power of mobile phone transmitter masts.

The Minister told the MP: “Government planning policy for telecommunications is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 (revised): Telecommunications, and the Department’s Circular 4/99 “Planning for Telecommunications”.

She continued: “The installation of any telecommunications masts in protected areas, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and conservation areas, and of masts above 13 metres in height elsewhere, is subject to a planning application for determination by the local planning authority. In the case of masts of 15 metres and below in height, local planning authorities are able to consider

more follows

MP SEEKS ASSURANCES ON MOBILE PHONE TRANSMITTER MASTS

the siting and appearance of such development by licensed telecommunications code system operators in accordance with the "prior approval procedure" under Part 24 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended).”

“Under the prior approval procedure, a local planning authority has the opportunity to say whether it wishes to approve, within 42 days for ground-based masts and 28 days for masts on a building or structure, details of the siting and appearance of the installation. If an authority considers that the development will pose a serious threat to amenity, it is able to refuse approval, although authorities are advised to explore the scope for modifying its siting and/or appearance before doing so.”

“Planning Authorities are not responsible for regulating the power of mobile phone masts, and have no powers to do so, Telecommunications operators have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure that their work activities, which would include the operation of their apparatus, do not present a risk to employees and the general public.”

“In its response to the report of the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones, issued on 11 May 2000 and placed in the libraries of both Houses, the Government said that it was minded to introduce a requirement for an application for full planning permission for all new telecommunications masts, but would need to consult widely before doing so, including on the principle and precise scope, of any new arrangements. We shall issue a consultation paper on this and related guidance as soon as practicable.”

The Pendle MP added: “There is very real public concern about these issues. I want to see the new guidance issued quickly.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 119/00 Tuesday 6 June 2000

NEW DEAL FOR PENDLE YOUNG PEOPLE IS WORKING

Figures just released to Parliament show that the Government's New Deal programme for the young, long-term unemployed has moved 303 people in Pendle off benefit and into work.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, said today he was encouraged by the figures which show that of the 303 people moving into work, 278 went into unsubsidised employment and 25 into subsidised. 227 have gone into "sustained" employment - those who have not returned to claim Jobseekers' Allowance or to transfer to another option within 13 weeks of starting that job. Since it started, 659 young people have joined the New Deal in Pendle.

The MP commented: "Young people matter to this Government. There are four New Deal options tailored to the interests and aptitudes of the young people themselves. There is no fifth option of claiming benefit and doing nothing in return."

Note to Editors: Number of Young People taking New Deal options

	As at end March 2000	Cumulative - from start of New Deal to end Mar 2000
Number on Gateway - entry to the New Deal	89	593
Number on New Deal Options - of which:	73	187
• Employment	19	37
• Education and Training	26	78
• Voluntary Sector	12	31
• Environment Task Force	16	41

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 120/00 Wednesday 7 June 2000

PRENTICE BACKS GOVERNMENT 12 POINT PLAN FOR UK TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is enthusiastically backing a new package of Government support for the UK's textile and clothing industry. The details were announced yesterday by Trade and Industry Secretary, Stephen Byers.

The 12 point plan aims to help the industry adapt and improve to meet global changes in the sector.

Responding to a report into the future of the industry by the Textile and Clothing Strategy Group (TCSG), Stephen Byers said:
"The global market for textiles and clothing is changing rapidly. Government and industry must work together to help industry improve its competitive position and respond to these changes.

"That is why we supported the establishment of the Textile and Clothing Strategy Group (TCSG) early last year to address the long-term competitiveness of the sector. Today we are announcing a 12 point plan, to start implementing the TCSG's recommendations. We shall follow this with further initiatives in the future.

"This plan will help companies to become more competitive, diversify into higher value and growth areas, embrace innovation and the new technologies, and strengthen their position in world markets. It will provide skills and training for workers in the industry and help textile and clothing workers who have lost their jobs to get new skills and new jobs."

Stephen Byers added: "Today's announcement is just the first stage in Government action in response to the TCSG report.

more follows

However, industry must also play its part, embracing change and equipping itself for the challenges of the global knowledge driven economy."

The Pendle MP - who is secretary of the Parliamentary All Party Textiles and Clothing Group - added: “This plan is just what the industry needs. The textile industry is still crucially important in areas such as Pendle.”

Note to Editors: The 12 point plan is as follows:

* Support for a new supply chain initiative to establish closer relationships between manufacturers and retailers. This will improve efficiency and flexibility and speed up supply chains, making industry more competitive. Government will work with key industry players on this initiative.

* Extended help for exporters. In the light of the TCSG's proposal to relax the "three times" rule limiting the number of overseas trade fairs firms can attend, Government will review this rule and make recommendations on its application. British Trade International will provide funding to support better focused export promotion by the British Apparel and Textile Export Advisory Group (BATEAG).

* Government will establish a Centre of Manufacturing Excellence in textiles at Heriot-Watt and will encourage commercial exploitation of research in textiles, including:

- A Faraday Partnership to encourage collaboration between leading universities, research organisations and industry to provide co-ordinated programmes of research, education and training leading to new products and processes. Three leading universities, Heriot-Watt, Leeds and UMIST together with the British Textiles Technology Group (BTTG) and up to 100 user firms will be involved in such projects.

- Government support for the development and exploitation of technical textile materials. For example, the development of "smart fabrics" with information and communication technologies like mobile phones, built into the material; and the development of a strong, lightweight, cost-saving material, which could replace side impact bars in cars.

* Encouraging the best British designers and fashion graduates to stay in the UK and develop their talent here with the textile and clothing industry.

* Government will call meetings between the industry and public procurement agencies to discuss the impact of current procurement policy on UK companies and changes that might be made to that policy within the context of our legal obligations.

* Government will work with the British Fashion Council to foster world class design, commercial awareness in our young designers, and

more follows

design-awareness in our companies. Projects include on-going support for young designers to show at London Fashion Week and DTI-sponsored designer-run workshops to encourage students into all aspects of the industry.

* Support for textile projects under the Engineering Technicians programme to raise the level of technical skills in the industry by building clusters and networks between SMEs. We are also working with the National Training Organisations for textiles and clothing of a range of other skills proposals.

* Government shall target textile and clothing companies and institutions to ensure that they are more fully aware of the opportunities offered by TCS, formerly known as the Teaching Company Scheme.

* Government will consider how to ensure that the Information Society Initiative, which helps small firms benefit from e-commerce, is targeted at textiles firms.

* The Employment Service will deploy its Rapid Response Units wherever significant textile redundancies occur in the UK, providing a targeted, personal service to help people find new jobs.

* The special arrangements established by the Employment Service in the North East for handling redundancies in the textiles industry, where job losses are often scattered over several factories rather

than concentrated at a single plant, will be evaluated and applied wherever they are needed in the UK.

* Government will work with the industry to identify the sector priorities, which should be targeted by the Employment Service's retraining programmes.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 121/00 Tuesday 6 June 2000

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT EXPECTED SOON ON HUNTING WITH DOGS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said today he expects a Commons statement soon to clarify the Government's position on hunting with dogs. The MP is leading a campaign to get blood sports banned and his amendment to the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill (New Clause 5) has secured the backing so far of 93 MPs.

The Government Chief Whip, Ann Taylor, will tell the PLP tomorrow morning of Commons business for next week. It is expected the Bill will come back to the floor of the Commons then for report stage. There is speculation the report of the Burns Inquiry will be handed to the Home Secretary this Friday.

Today, the Campaign for the Protection of Hunted Animals (the umbrella organisation which includes the RSPCA, the League Against Cruel Sports and the International Fund for Animal Welfare) is unleashing a hard hitting advertisement calling for hunting with dogs to be banned. And in a letter which will arrive in MPs' post bags today, the CPHA is also urging MPs to back the Prentice amendment.

Yesterday, in a bid to step up the pressure on the Government, the Pendle MP pressed Home Office Minister, Mike O'Brien, to say what steps the Government planned to take to assist the passage through both Houses of Parliament of a Private Members' Bill designed to secure a ban on hunting with dogs. The Private Member's route is the Government's preferred option although this has been dismissed by Prentice as unworkable. "It is leading everyone up the garden path again."

The Minister told the MP: "The precise steps which may be needed

more follows

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT EXPECTED SOON ON HUNTING WITH DOGS

in terms of Government time and assistance to secure the opportunity of a free vote on a hunting bill will depend upon the circumstances at the time. My rt hon Friend, the Home Secretary, has already indicated our broad approach on it."

Prentice commented: "If the Government sticks to this line then I shall have no alternative but to put my amendment to the vote. Another Private Member's Bill will fail. What we need is a multi-option Government Bill - like the one on Sunday Trading - which would allow MP's a free vote. This is the kind of approach which should suit the Prime Minister down to the ground."

"I really don't see what the problem is."

Note 1 to Editors The Commons has already voted once since the General Election to ban hunting with hounds. In November 1998 the Commons gave a second reading to Michael Foster's Private Member's Bill by 411 votes to 157 but arcane Parliamentary procedures torpedoed it.

Note 2 to Editors: On 12 April at Prime Minister's Questions, the PM reaffirmed his commitment to a ban on fox hunting. Asked whether a ban would be brought in, he said: "Let us be quite clear. The views of this House are already well known and so are mine." On BBC Question Time on 8 July 1999, the PM promised a vote to ban fox hunting. "It will be banned - as soon as we possibly can." In September 1999 he told BBC's Breakfast with Frost: "We will give MPs a chance to vote. I am personally against fox hunting."

The Countryside Bill amends the law relating to countryside access and rights of way and offers new protection for wildlife and nature conservation.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 122/00 Monday 12 June 2000

PENDLE MP ENTERS CYBERSPACE ON www.gordonprenticemp.com

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, takes his campaigning onto the World Wide Web today with the launch of his new web-site.

The web-site will give details, week by week, of emerging issues the MP is tacking at Westminster and in his Pendle constituency. The site will be updated at least weekly - and when events are moving very quickly, daily.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “More and more people are getting wired up to the new technology. It’s a great way of communicating with people, easily and speedily.”

The site carries a short constituency profile, a weekly viewpoint from the MP and a page which allows people to express their own point of view on things the MP has said and done. Another section gives details of campaigns he is involved in. Other pages give details of the MPs surgeries and contact points.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 123/00 Tuesday 6 June 2000

BANK TELLS MP: “WE HAVE NO PLANS TO CLOSE LLOYDS TSB IN NELSON.”

The Nelson Branch of Lloyds TSB is going to stay open for business. The Branch Director has told local MP, Gordon Prentice, that they “currently and for the foreseeable future, have no plans to close the branch”. Over recent months there has been intense speculation about the future of banking in small and medium sized towns and villages in areas such as Pendle.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The news from Lloyds TSB is very welcome. The last thing Pendle needs is a spate of bank closures.”

In March, the MP wrote to Barclays calling on them to think again about their controversial decision to close their Earby Branch. Barclays stuck with their closure decision just at the time when Banks were slammed for overcharging their customers by up to £5bn.

Don Cruickshank, the Treasury’s special banking investigator, published in March a 344-page report into the financial services sector. Mr Cruickshank condemned what he said were £3bn-£5bn of excess profits mostly from personal and small business

customers, by charging too much for money transfers and paying too little for deposits.

Note to Editors: The Branch Director's letter reads: "I read with some concern your comments in the *Nelson Leader* on 12/5/00, regarding the closure of bank branches in Nelson and I would like to allay some of your fears regarding the presence of Lloyds TSB in Nelson.

Firstly, I would like to stress that the 'top secret report' referred to in

more follows

BANK TELLS MP: "WE HAVE NO PLANS TO CLOSE LLOYDS TSB IN NELSON."

the article in the *Nelson Leader* and first highlighted in the *Sunday Times,* was not compiled for the benefit of Lloyds TSB and we never used the consultants who allegedly prepared this report.

I would also like to point out that we currently and for the foreseeable future, have no plans to close the branch of Lloyds TSB at 23 Manchester Road, Nelson. Customers of Lloyds TSB have access to the largest network of branches in the UK and personal customers can also carry out basic banking transactions at post offices across England and Wales. From August this year, this partnership will be extended to Scotland.

In recent months there has been increasing concern from the public about branch closures and we have listened very carefully to the concerns of customers and communities. We have therefore taken the decision that from May this year, and for the foreseeable future, we will not close a branch where we are currently the last bank in that community.

When we do have to close a branch, our principal focus will be on branches where another branch of Lloyds TSB is very close by. Following the merger between Lloyds Bank and TSB in 1995, there are locations where branches of Lloyds TSB are on the same high street. Merging these branches into one branch will enable us to maintain a presence in the communities we serve, whilst restructuring the network to reflect changes in customer demand and the need to reinvest in services such as telephone, banking and internet banking."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 124/00 Tuesday 13 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP SAYS JACK STRAW IS A HERO!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, last night withdrew his amendment to the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill which would have the effect of banning hunting with dogs. The Countryside Bill which comes back to the floor of the Commons for its report stage this afternoon brings in the right to roam - a cause long championed by the Pendle MP.

Facing with the prospect of a damaging rebellion from Labour backbenchers determined to support the Prentice amendment, the Government yesterday promised to bring in its own Bill in November which would set out a series of options from the status quo to a complete ban.

Yesterday, Gordon Prentice told the Commons: “I have not said this before, but let me say it now: my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is a hero. The Bill (to ban hunting with dogs) is not a distraction because Labour Members speak for the vast majority of people, and that rabble in Parliament Square speak for no one but themselves. Is it not the case that the real distinction is not between town and country, but between the people who relish the idea of killing for fun and those who, like me, are repelled by that?”

Jack Straw thanked the MP for his compliment. “In my job they are few and far between, so I will savour it. His views are very strongly held and I respect that.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle
www.gordonprenticemp.com

For Immediate Release. No 125/00 Tuesday 13 June 2000

MP TO QUIZ ONE 2 ONE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has written to the Chief Executive of the Mobile Phone Company One 2 One to seek assurances on the safety aspects of their mobile phone transmitter masts. Recent press reports have pointed to a transmitter mast owned by One 2 One in Barnoldswick suggesting it is a threat to health.
Almost the entire country is covered by transmitter masts ensuring widespread use of mobile phones.

Last week the MP asked Health Minister Yvette Cooper what research has been commissioned into the possible links between proximity to mobile phone transmitter masts and the development of cancers.

The Minister told the MP: “The Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (the Stewart group) was set up to investigate the broader public health implications of mobile phone technologies. The report includes a number of recommendations for research which are being taken forward by Government in a comprehensive programme of research costing several millions of pounds. It is planned to launch this programme by September.”

The Stewart report was asked to examine possible effects of mobile phones, base stations and transmitters on health and ran a broad programme of consultation. The report adopted an evidence-based approach to health issues in particular, but also considered user choice and the importance of such new technologies to the economy of the UK.

In conclusion the report pointed out that the balance of evidence does not suggest mobile phone technologies put the health of the general population of the UK at risk. Given the much lower exposures to radiation from base stations than from handsets, the greater concern from the people who gave evidence to the Expert Group about the former is paradoxical.

more follows.....

MP TO QUIZ ONE 2 ONE

The report concluded that this contradiction arises because individuals can choose whether or not to use a mobile phone, whereas they have little control over exposures from base stations. In addition, people derive a personal benefit from the use of a phone, but gain nothing directly from the presence of a base station close to their home or place of work. If anything they may suffer a loss of amenity and possibly a reduction in the value of property. In the face of this threat many feel excluded and disempowered by the planning system now in operation. The resultant frustration also has negative effects on people’s health and well-being.

In response the Government said that it is minded to introduce a requirement for full planning permission for all new telecommunication masts, as public consultation is an integral part of the planning process. The Government said that they will need to consult widely before doing so including the principle and precise scope of any new arrangements. A consultation paper will be issued on this and related guidance which will include consideration of health concerns.

The Pendle MP said: “The matter of health and mobile phone transmitters is one of great public concern, the sooner the research can bring the issue to a conclusion the better.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle
www.gordonprenticemp.com

For Immediate Release. No 126/00 Tuesday 13 June 2000

MP ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has today welcomed the news that the old trains on the Skipton to Leeds line are to be replaced. The MP quizzed Railtrack who tell him that the new rolling stock will be on line by the end of the year.

The MP said: "The new trains will be coming not a minute too soon. The current rolling stock is, quite frankly, well past its use by date. The Government is keen to see more people using public transport but it needs to be clean, reliable and up-to-date. Full marks to Railtrack and train operator Northern Spirit for their efforts so far."

The MP continued: "The people of West Craven will be pleased with this news. For many of my constituents Skipton is the nearest station and the passengers from there will be travelling in higher standards of comfort and safety. However, rail users on the Colne to Preston line are still travelling in clapped out rolling stock and I am pressing First North Western to update their rolling stock as soon as possible."

Note to editor: The MP will be meeting Haydn Abbot, managing director of Angel Trains this month. Angel Trains are funding new diesel units for First North Western and the MP will be keen to know when they will be replacing the rolling stock

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 127/00 Tuesday 20 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP PRESSES FOR EARLY START ON NORTH VALLEY TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing Lancashire County Council to get cracking on traffic management schemes which will help tackle the queuing and delays on North Valley Road in Colne.

Last month, the County decided to press ahead with the Heysham - M6 link in preference to the construction of the A56 Village By-pass. At the time the MP said he wanted the County to roll up its sleeves and get down to work on local road improvements.

Environment Director, Graham Harding has now told the MP that the proposals for Colne town centre and the North Valley area are currently being designed in detail and a bid for funding for the work to be carried out in the next financial year is included in the Lancashire Local Transport Plan which will be submitted to Government at the end of July.

The MP said: "This is what I want to see. Swift action."

Note to Editors: In a letter to the Pendle MP dated 19 June, Graham Harding wrote: "The proposals for Colne town centre and the North Valley area which were illustrated as part of the "No Bypass" solution at the public consultation are currently being designed in detail by my Highways Consultancy and a bid for funding for the work to be carried out in the next financial year (2001-02) is included in the Lancashire Local Transport Plan which will be submitted to Government at the end of July. Whether it can be carried out in that year will depend on the level of statement awarded to the County Council, and that will not be known until December.

Land outside the current highway boundary will be required to complete the works and I am hopeful that this can be obtained by agreement. If, however, it becomes necessary to use compulsory purchase powers it would inevitably mean a delay to the programme."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 128/00 Tuesday 20 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP RENEWS CALL FOR ELECTED HOUSE OF LORDS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, launched a withering attack last night on the proposals put forward by Lord Wakeham for a largely appointed House of Lords.

In the Commons debate - taking place five months after the Royal Commission reported - the MP told the House: “To be blunt, I think that the Wakeham proposals are half-baked; they are risible... If we are to have a second Chamber, it should be a small, directly elected Chamber.”

The MP continued: “We have heard about the gender, age and ethnic background requirements and the need for identification with different parts of the United Kingdom. Fifty per cent. of the population own 94 per cent. of the nation's wealth; thus the remaining 50 per cent. own only 6 per cent. Perhaps there is a requirement that poor people should be represented in the upper House.”

“What about social class? As we have all those other requirements, would it be so unusual for an upper Chamber adequately and properly to reflect the social class profile of Britain? What about all those people who are Oxbridge educated? Will there be some measure for that? Will there be x per cent. of Members from provincial universities, y per cent. from Oxbridge and z per cent. from among those who have not attended university at all? The whole thing is ludicrous. The more we go into the matter, the more we realise that it is completely unsustainable, logically flawed and politically mad.”

“My friend Peter Pike mentioned the role of the Church in this

more follows

PENDLE MP RENEWS CALL FOR ELECTED HOUSE OF LORDS

new constitutional settlement. That is another matter I find it difficult to accept. I believe in secular politics and that we should be governed by a secular Parliament. I live with the fact that we have the established Church along the Corridor because of our history, but it would be ridiculous to move to a position in which the Buddhist, the Baptist, the Jain, the Jew, the Muslim and the Sikh have a place in our legislature while Catholics did not because canon law would not allow it.”

“On the election of regional Members, are we seriously to suggest to the British people that we want a system that will put Members in the other place for 15 years, with the possibility--the probability--that the Appointments Commission will appoint them for a further 15 years? That would mean 30-year membership of the upper House. That is ludicrous.”

“We shall be left with a bloated, elephantine upper Chamber. The present life peers will not retire. They will be invited to consider their position, but they will not retire. Every year, there will be an accretion of Members of the House of Lords. It will grow exponentially: 550, 600, 650, 700. When will it stop? In short, it would not be a Parliament for the 21st century.”

“The Labour party should abandon its proposals to embrace Wakeham--they would be ridiculed in a general election campaign--and instead propose a democratic alternative.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 129/00 Tuesday 20 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP BIKES TO WORK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, joined hordes of MPs pedalling to the Houses of Parliament at breakfast time this morning to launch this year's Bike to Work Day. The Event, held on the 20th June, heralds the biggest drive ever to get Brits on bikes.

Bike to Work Day, co-ordinated by the CTC (Cyclists Touring Club) and in association with Going for Green, is part of the mammoth Millennium Festival of Cycling Week, 17-25 June. The Festival will be the UK's largest celebration of cycling, attracting one million participants to 4000 events nation-wide. The Millennium Festival of Cycling is a Millennium Commission Lottery funded project, forming part of the Millennium Festival.

According to the CTC everyday more than one million people cycle to work.

CTC claims that research has shown that cycle commuters are more efficient, more productive and take fewer days off work than their sedentary colleagues - even a daily commute of five miles can significantly improve health.

The MP said: “The route from the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions to the House of Commons is hardly taxing. We skirted Buckingham Palace and sped past St James Park and arrived in Parliament Square minutes later. The fact that the police stopped the traffic to let us pass did help!”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle
www.gordonprenticemp.com

For Immediate Release. No 130/00 Tuesday 20 June 2000

MP IN TALKS AT ROLLS ROYCE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet shop stewards and top management at the Rolls Royce plant in Barnoldswick this Friday 23 June. The MP's move comes as workers at the plant are balloting this week on possible strike action in the light of the company's plans to cut the workforce at Barnoldswick and across the UK.

The MP said: "The situation is very difficult. The company has a bulging order book standing at £13.2 billion which is the equivalent of about 3 years worth of work and last year the profit went up 11%. In these circumstances a lot of people are scratching their heads and wondering how this squares with the planned redundancies."

The MP continued "I've already met some of the senior management from Rolls Royce headquarters and they tell me that the order book is 'big but fragile' and it seems as if the contracts were won at a price where planned cost reductions were built in."

"Rolls Royce spends about £600 million a year in research and development and it is important for them to keep ahead of the competition. But the government gave Rolls Royce £200 million in launch aid to help develop the hugely successful Trent series of engines so they want to see the company succeed. That's what I want too, but surely this must be possible without compulsory job losses."

After the meeting in Barlick on Friday the MP will be following things up with a meeting in London on 27 June with Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle
www.gordonprenticemp.com

For Immediate Release. No 131/00 Tuesday 20 June 2000

A PHONE CALL AWAY FROM KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is encouraging all workers to know their rights. The call comes following the issue of the latest leaflet from the TUC called 'Tackling violence at work'. The leaflet highlights steps that can be taken by employers, employees and unions to make the workplace a safer place for everyone.

The MP said: "It is a sad fact of life that one in five people at work are attacked or abused every year just for doing their job. The TUC have issued a series of leaflets encouraging people to work together to tackle these problems."

The advice includes identifying who is at risk. Anyone who comes into contact with the public during the course of their work can be at risk. But some jobs carry more danger of attack. These include security and protective services, nurses, care workers, and those who work in public transport and catering.

The MP said: "The risk of abuse or attack should never just go with the job or be blamed on bad luck. Employers should develop safe systems of working through practical policies."

The TUC also run a 'Know Your Rights' phone line for information on a range of workplace rights. The number is 0870 600 4882.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 131/00 Tuesday 20 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NO UN SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT FOR INDIA WHILE KASHMIR REMAINS UNRESOLVED says PRENTICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, told Foreign Office Minister, Peter Hain, in the Commons this afternoon that the proposed enlargement of the UN Security Council should exclude countries such as India who are not fully in compliance with existing UN resolutions.

Prentice said there had been suggestions that India would be a "strong contender" for a place as a permanent member but this should not be countenanced while the Kashmir issue was still festering. Decades after they were passed, UN resolutions on Kashmir have still not been acted on.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "The Government's policy is to allow regional groupings of countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia to decide for themselves those countries who will represent them. But the UK should take a view too. India and Pakistan are both nuclear weapons states but if there were the prospect of a nuclear exchange we would not say it was only a matter for them. The rest of the world would have a view!"

The Minister told the Pendle MP: "The UK Government believes early enlargement of the UN Security Council is essential to make it more representative of today's world. We support expansion of the Council from 15 members to 24 including five additional permanent seats: two for Germany and Japan plus three for developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 133/00 Tuesday 20 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP URGES COUNTY TO KEEP BARLICK SCHOOL OPEN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet education chiefs at County Hall in Preston this Friday afternoon (23 June) in a fresh bid to secure the future of Rainhall Road Primary School in Barnoldswick, the town where the MP lives. The MP will be meeting the Chair of the Education Committee, Hazel Harding, and the County's Education Director, Chris Trinick.

The Local Education Authority has been consulting the public on the future of the school. The school's intake in September 1999 was only 5 pupils. There is a capacity of 140 at the school and only 65 currently on their roll. At the same time there are 191 unfilled places in nearby schools and I am told this is likely to increase to more than 300 by 2005.

The MP said: "There has been a lot of comment about the statistics used by the LEA to support its case. I believe Rainhall Road is a good school and I want it to stay. That will be my message."

The school was inspected by OFSTED in February 1997. At the time of the inspection there were 87 pupils on roll. The report was satisfactory noting a number of positive features including very good leadership provided by the Headteacher in conjunction with the governing body.

The MP visited the school in March to discuss the situation with the Headteacher, Mrs Shirley Cormack, and the chair of governors, Margaret Bell.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 134/00 Thursday 22 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS CRACK DOWN ON FRAUD

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing new moves to clamp down on fraud. The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, today launched a confidential tax and benefits phoneline aimed at encouraging people out of the hidden economy. It comes six months ahead of tough new measures to combat benefit fraud and tax evasion and will give people

the chance to move onto the right side of the law before the crackdown is implemented.

The hidden economy costs £80 billion a year with £500 million lost in benefits paid to claimants believed to be working while signing on - extra help that should be going to those who need it most.

Note to Editors: The Government is determined to crack down on the hidden economy as part of its aim to achieve full employment. Already the Government is helping more people move off benefit and into work: Employment is at an all-time high with 978,000 more people in work, thanks in part to the New Deal. The Conservative Opposition would axe the New Deal. The Governmnet introduced the first-ever minimum Wage. The Shadow Chancellor, Michael Portillo, called it 'immoral'. (General Election campaign 1997) And the Working Families Tax Credit is now on stream, ensuring more than a million families keep more of what they earn. The Opposition would scrap this too, costing these families an extra £20 a week.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 135/00 Tuesday 27 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ASYLUM SEEKERS

The latest asylum figures out this week show that decisions on applications are being made at record levels, bringing the backlog down.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “The Government is reforming the asylum system to help genuine asylum seekers, whilst ensuring that those with unfounded claims can be removed quickly, sending a strong signal to others thinking of exploiting the system.”

The MP is to meet Pendle Chief Executive, Stephen Barnes, this Friday (30 June) to discuss the local situation. He is to meet Home Secretary, Jack Straw, on 12 July.

The MP continued: “The Government is employing record numbers of caseworkers to speed up decisions. And hauliers now face a civil penalty of £2,000 for each illegal immigrant brought into the UK - this has already cut the number of clandestines found at Dover by 26 per cent. The Government is also increasing the number of immigration Service officers by 700 this year.”

The MP added: “This is not a UK problem but an EU problem - in 1999 Belgian numbers rose by 63 per cent. And it is not new. In the early 90s the previous

Government presided over a doubling of applications. The UK is taking action in line with other countries - Germany has reduced applications from 400,000 to fewer than 100,000 with similar measures to ours."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 136/00 Wednesday 28 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES NEW DRIVE TO KEEP HOSPITALS "SQUEAKY CLEAN"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed moves to ensure that all hospitals are "squeaky clean". The MP quizzed Health Minister, John Denham, on the steps he is taking to ensure that hospital wards are kept clean and tidy at all times and that bed linen is changed frequently and whenever soiled.

The Minister told the MP today: "NHS trust chief executives are responsible for standards of cleanliness in hospitals. All acute trusts have the assistance of an infection control team. The Infection Control Nurses Association and the Association of Domestic Managers have published "Standards for Environmental Cleanliness in Hospitals."

The Minister continued: "In wards it is for the qualified nurse responsible for the patient's care to decide when a linen change is necessary, but this should occur whenever it is soiled. The NHS controls assurance framework published in November 1999 includes a standard on infection control in NHS trusts. A section on cleanliness is being developed. Both clinical and organisational systems for monitoring and assuring standards of care will be looked at annually as part of NHS performance monitoring arrangements. The standards for hospital cleanliness and infection control will be subject to independent inspections by the Commission for Health improvement and the Audit Commission."

The MP commented: "This is good news. Hospitals need to be spotless everywhere - not just in the operating theatres and the surgical front line. It's time to bring back the carbolic soap."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 137/00 Wednesday 28 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP PLEDGES END TO CHILD POVERTY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, spoke out today in support of the Government's moves to eliminate child poverty.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "Everyone knows there is a lot more to do. Nevertheless, the Government has introduced the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), helping three million children in 1.5 million families. There has been a record rise in child benefit - now up to £15 for the eldest child. This has helped 12 million children."

"The Government is lifting one million children out of poverty, but the next step is to cut child poverty by half in 10 years. We are increasing financial support through the new child credit on top of child benefit."

In the Times yesterday, Economics Professor Robin Marris said the trend towards widespread poverty began after 1979 but has been reversed since 1997, thanks to the Government's benefit and tax reforms. He also backs Unicef findings that the government's current package of measures alone will cut child poverty by one third.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 138/00 Wednesday 28 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ROLLS ROYCE TALKS STILL ON A KNIFE EDGE

Plans to slash almost 2,000 jobs across Rolls Royce plants in the UK have forced company employees to consider strike action - the first for over 20 years.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, yesterday met RR Chief Executive, John Rose, and other top management people in a two hour meeting at the company HQ in Buckingham Gate, London in a bid to chart a way through the current crisis.

152 jobs are planned to go at the RR Barnoldswick plant in the town where the MP lives. Agreement has been reached on about 120 jobs which are to go through voluntary redundancy.

Speaking after the meeting, the MP said: "The situation is not looking good. People in Barlick are saying they will not accept compulsory redundancies - and I can well understand that point of view. Rolls Royce has a huge £13.2 billion order book and is securing about 30% of all civil aero engine orders world wide yet the company says it must drive down costs to match its competitors."

"John Rose told me there is "intense pricing pressure" and that the "levels of cost reduction required are challenging to the company". He also admitted that RR were looking for 7% reduction in supplier costs every year. More ominously, he said the company would put work to where it is done most cost effectively."

"The message was pretty blunt and uncompromising and I was left wondering where it would all end. I challenged the Chief Executive to tell me about the RR 5 year plan - I wanted to know what the company would look like then. Unfortunately, I was not

more follows

left with a very clear idea."

"He did say the company had a good future if it could match its competitors in terms of productivity and profitability and he valued the skills of the people RR employs. That was good to hear."

"However, the plain fact is that redundancies and bulging order books do not make happy bedfellows."

"On the positive side, we talked about what the Government could do to help. I was told that support for research and development was the most cost effective thing the Government could do. We shall obviously take these issues up with Ministers - but they don't bear on the immediate problem."

"We also discussed exports credits and the RR marine engine programme."

The MP met local management and shop stewards last Friday when he visited the Barnoldswick plant for talks.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 139/00 Wednesday 28 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS MOVE TO KEEP POST OFFICES OPEN

The Government today announced innovative schemes and cash support to prevent post office closures.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today gave a warm welcome to the announcement of a post office support plan given in the House of Commons today by Trade Secretary Stephen Byers.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government has said there must be no preventable closures between now and 2006. The government will provide more funds to help keep small and rural post offices open. And in a splendid initiative, there is to be a new Universal Bank to provide easy banking for those who currently do not have an account. The post office will run the new bank. The Government will continue to invest in the modernisation of the post office's services. All benefits can continue to be collected in cash by those who wish to do so."

The MP added: "There has been concern over the future of the network and I hope this will reassure those people who were worried. 3,000 post offices closed under the previous government, but we are now going to arrest the decline. It is great news because small post offices provide vital services to their community."

Gordon Prentice added, "I especially welcome the proposed new Universal Bank. Over 3 million people do not have a bank account. This offers a way to open up a simple account and to make the paying of household bills cheaper and easier for many people on low incomes."

more follows

MP BACKS MOVE TO KEEP POST OFFICES OPEN

"Payments of benefits and pensions in cash remains secure - as it always was."

Note to Editors: The Conservative Government closed 3,000 post offices and planned to privatise and break up the Post Office. The Conservative Party still plans to do this. The Government is committed to a publicly owned Post office. We are giving It new commercial freedoms and are committed to Its modernisation.

This package guarantees the future of rural and urban deprived post offices, which could be threatened by greater commercialisation and lays the foundation for the ire. Invention of the network to provide bigger and brighter offices- There will be no preventable closures In the rural network.

This commitment gives Post Offices a breathing space to modernise and develop new areas of business.

Benefit claimants will be able to continue to receive their benefits In cash across Post Office counters after the switch to ACT.

The Post Office will be required to prevent all avoidable closures in rural areas between now and 2006 (the policy thereafter will be informed by advice from the Postal Services Commission (PSC) and Consumer Council for Postal Services (CCPS) who will consult closely with the Post Office and the Unions).

This means they will be required to maintain post offices in rural areas except where it is impossible to find replacements for departing sub post masters/mistresses (they are independently run franchises; nobody can be forced to run a post office).

Money has been set aside in the Spending Review to underwrite this but in return Post Offices will have to modernise - diversifying into new business areas as traditional lines of business decline. In particular automation of the Post Office network will open the doors to a series of new banking, Internet related and other business propositions.

Financial support will also be available to maintain and develop Post Offices in urban deprived areas. This is important because in these areas there is a scarcity of shopping facilities and prices tend to be higher than supermarkets further away. Their problems are exactly the same as for rural Post Offices. If the Post Office decides that some offices need to close there will be compensation available for those sub postmasters.

The Government will now consult on the mechanism to channel support to individual post offices in rural areas. There are three options: via local authorities; via the Post Office; channelling a subsidy through one or more national agencies: e.g. Countryside Agency. A parallel structure will be developed for urban deprived areas.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 0181 3456789 (pager) then give the call sign GORDON 1 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 140/00 Thursday 29 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SLAMS REPORT ON MS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has warned the Government to expect trouble if a leaked recommendation from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) is accepted which will restrict the availability of Beta Interferon for people with MS.

The drug, which became available in 1995 and which costs about £9,500 per patient per year, helps some people with the condition.

The MP is President of the Burnley and Pendle MS Society and is secretary of the Parliamentary All Party Group on MS. Earlier this week he tabled a Commons Motion with Birmingham MP, Robin Corbett, calling for the drug to be available for NHS patients.

Health Minister John Denham told the Pendle MP today: "The National Institute for Clinical Excellence plans to issue its guidance to the National Health Service, in early August, unless one of the parties concerned appeals formally against the outcome of the appraisal."

Gordon Prentice said: "There will be a battle royal if the availability of this drug is restricted. I shall be standing shoulder to shoulder with the MS Society."

About 85,000 people suffer from MS in the UK. The condition typically strikes people in the prime of life. It typically affects more women than men. What causes MS is still unclear.

Note to Editors: This is a briefing prepared by the MS Society for the All Party Parliamentary Group on MS: The National Institute of Clinical Excellence has issued its interim guidance on beta interferon for the treatment of Multiple sclerosis. The widely leaked guidance proposes to deny people with MS the opportunity to receive beta interferon, the first
drug to effectively treat the symptoms of this most debilitating of diseases.

more follows

MP SLAMS REPORT ON MS

If there is no change from NICE's provisional position the post-code lottery will be set in stone. Those lucky enough to have obtained beta-interferon through the NHS before the NICE guillotine falls will continue to benefit from a drug which will be denied to others. Treatment available in many other parts of the developed world will be withheld from patients in this country creating a 'passport lottery' as well.

The lobby of Parliament held in March - attended by over 1,000 people affected by MS - demonstrates the weight of anxiety which surrounds NICE's deliberations. NICE's provisional determination - that beta-interferon should only be available to those who are already receiving the drug - is close to a worst-case scenario.

There are serious ethical and practical issues which arise from this decision. It has been suggested that beta interferons are less cost effective than other interventions such as MS specialist nursing and symptom relief. The key difference between these is that specialist nursing and symptom relief do not modify the course of the disease - only beta interferons do this. On a practical level, there is no evidence on the effectiveness of nursing interventions, which is as robust as that for beta-interferons.

The NICE Process If NICE is to deliver public respect and confidence in its decisions the *process* by which NICE conducts its appraisals will be as important as the *outcomes* of those appraisals. The Society is concerned that the lack of openness in the process and the lack of direct patient involvement will not inspire respect and confidence.

An issue of particular concern to patient organisations is how the patient viewpoint features in the NICE appraisal process. We await the issue of formal guidance from NICE on this, What is clear is that the Appraisal Committee does not regard input from patient organisations as an essential part of its meetings...

The provisional appraisal on beta-interferon is evidence that NICE does not take proper account of the patient perspective. The benefits of beta-interferon are described as 'modest'. This shows a lack of understanding of the real impact of relapses (which can include loss of sight, mobility, continence and involve hospitalisation and weeks of recovery). It also shows a lack of understanding about the real difference a reduction in the frequency of relapses makes - less reliance on carers, more chance of remaining in employment, less anxiety about the next relapse.

It has been suggested that Health Ministers are keen to emphasise that there is no clear view about beta interferon within the neurology profession. However although some neurologists do not wish to prescribe the drug, a clear majority support its use, even if a minority do not favour it. It is now six years since the original paper was published suggesting that beta interferon has an effect in the treatment of multiple sclerosis and, although approximately 1200 patients are receiving the drug in the UK, this level is very low compared to other countries."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 141/00 Friday 30 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FOOD FOR THOUGHT IN ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS WEEK 2000

Next week is Alzheimer's Awareness Week (2-8 July 2000) and the Alzheimer's Society will be raising awareness of the problems that people with dementia may face in relation to food and drink.

The Society will be talking to those who have responsibility for the care of people with dementia about how food and drink - one of the most fundamental aspects of care and quality of life - can be improved in care homes, hospitals and in the community.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, who is a keen supporter of the Society, said: "Just because a person has dementia, it doesn't mean they can be fed anything. A varied and tasty diet where the food is presented in an attractive way is essential."

Harry Cayton, chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society said: "I'm pleased that Pendle's MP is supporting our Awareness Week. It is all about improving the care of people with dementia and providing the right information and advice to their carers."

Notes to editors- There are over 700,000 people in the UK with dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. There are over 81 0 people with dementia in Pendle. Dementia affects 1 in 20 people over the age of 65 and 1 in 5 over the age of 80. Approximately one third of people with dementia live alone, one third with a family carer and one third in long term residential,

nursing or hospital accommodation. The Alzheimer's Society is the leading care and research charity in the UK for people with dementia and their carers. For information and advice on dementia and details of local branches and support groups, contact the Alzheimer's helpline on 0845 300 0336. Mon - Fri 8.30 am to 6.30 pm.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 142/00 Thursday 29 June 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

REACTION TO MOWLAM COMMENTS 'HYSTERICAL' says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon, today called for a debate into the future role of the monarchy following Mo Mowlam's comments that the Queen should move out of Buckingham Palace. The Cabinet Office Minister yesterday apologised for any offence which may have been caused by her remarks.

At Business questions today the Pendle MP called for a more calm and reflective debate. "There is a hysterical reaction to comments from Mo Mowlam about the use of Royal Palaces," he said. "I just wondered, given that this is supposed to be a no go area for elected politicians, if it would be in order for us to have a debate in this House about the role of the monarchy so that these issues could be addressed in a calm and reflective manner."

The Leader of the House Margaret Beckett told the MP she could not undertake to find time for such a debate in the chamber.

The Pendle MP is to meet the Queen next month. He will be going to Buckingham Palace with other MPs - as part of a "get-to-know- you" process.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 143/00 Tuesday 4 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NEW PAGER NUMBER

Please note my new pager number:

07644 005297

The old number no longer works.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 144/00 Tuesday 4 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP QUERIES NUMBER OF ROYAL PALACES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has queried the number of Royal Palaces which are needed by the Royal Family to enable them to carry out their constitutional functions to the State.

The MP was speaking during today's Statement to the Commons by the Prime Minister who told MPs that the Civil List payments to support the monarch will be frozen at £7.9 million annually for the next ten years. Under an agreement negotiated by the previous Government, the Civil List increased annually at 7.5% at a time when

inflation has been falling. Inflation now is about 2.2%. As a result, a surplus of about £35m has built up.

The review of Royal finances will bring some costs borne by the Queen into the Civil List which will in future be borne by the State. These transfers include staff pensions and some of the costs of running the Royal Palaces.

The Pendle MP told the Prime Minister there were 58 Royal bedrooms in Buckingham Palace and 78 bathrooms, and nine palaces supported by payments from the State "leaving aside Sandringham and Balmoral". The MP continued: "How many palaces does the Royal Family need in order to discharge its functions to the state?" The Prime Minister said Buckingham Palace "is a palace and likely to have more than one bathroom there. There are now over 2 million visits a year which is a significant number."

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “The Royal finances should be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. It puzzles me why that should be considered a strange proposition.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 145/00 Tuesday 4 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CHILDCARE BOOST TO PENDLE

A total of 36 new out-of-school childcare places and 89 pre-school places were created in Pendle up to the end of December 1999 according to figures released by the Government today. From January - March 2000 a further 12 out-of-school and 13 pre-school places came on stream at St Mary’s Play School in Pendle.

Commenting on the figures, the area’s MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “This is good news and we are making steady progress. Our Childcare Strategy is ambitious but we are getting there.”

Note to Editors: The Education Minister, Margaret Hodge, wrote to the Pendle MP on 4 July as follows: “I last wrote to you in April about progress we had made with the National Childcare Strategy. The purpose of this further letter is to keep you up to date with what is happening locally and inform you of the total number of places for the 1999-2000 financial year.

In April I reported the creation of more than 106,000 new places between April and December 1999, well ahead of target profile. I am pleased to be able to say to you now that the EYDCPs have reported that by end March 2000 they had created some 140,000 new places - exceeding the yearly target by

70%! These 140,000 new places have not only replaced those which closed during the year due to normal turnover but have also added more than 74,000 to the stock of places available across England. Partnership targets for new childcare places to be created during 2000-2001 amount to almost 130,000 - which will lift the number of new places created since May 1997 to well over 300,000.

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships are, of course, delivering the Strategy at a local level. You will have already received a copy of the letter informing your local authority of the outcome of the assessment of their Early Years Development and Childcare Plans for 2000-2001. 1 am pleased that the quality of the Plans this year has been so high, with 146 of the 150 Plans submitted receiving immediate full approval. I have carefully scrutinised the plans to ensure that a number of key criteria are being met, including plans to ensure that we improve quality as we increase the number of childcare places."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 146/00 **EMBARGO** Thurs 6 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TAKES HEART IN NEW PLAN TO DOUBLE CARDIAC OPERATIONS IN NORTH WEST

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed news that the number of specialist heart operations in the North West is to double over the next ten years. The MP was responding to plans by the North West NHS to boost the region's cardiac work.

According to the NHS Regional Executive work has already begun and resources have been have been made available this year to fund more than 350 extra specialist heart operations.

The National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease sets Health Authorities the goal of achieving 750 coronary artery by-pass grafts (heart by-pass operations) and 750 angioplasties (clearing of blocked arteries) per million of population every year. In the North West Region, this means doubling the number of specialist heart operations over the next 10 years.

In a related development, Health Secretary Alan Milburn announced that March this year, that new fast track chest clinics are to be set up to provide rapid treatment and care for those with heart problems. The clinics would mean that patients with suspected angina and other heart conditions would no longer wait for months to be seen. They will be seen by specialists within two weeks of going to their GP.

The Pendle MP said: "The Government has pledged to halve deaths from coronary heart disease by 2010. In East Lancashire we have heart disease is a big killer and these initiatives are great news."

In December 1999, the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale

More follows

MP TAKES HEART IN CARDIAC INITIATIVE

Community Health Council published an investigation into Cardiology Services for the area. Given the high incidence of heart disease in East Lancashire, the CHC called for a dedicated Cardio-Vascular Unit.

Note 1 to Editors: The CHC report stated: There should be one dedicated invasive cardiologist per 80.000 of our population, with access to the catheter labs at the specialist centres, on a sessional basis. Patients need early intervention to improve their quality of life avoiding further deterioration of their condition, the need for more complex surgery or premature death. Therefore there has to be a dramatic reduction in the waiting lists. There ought to be a properly resourced Cardiac Rehabilitation Team to meet the needs of the population, comprising a minimum of two rehabilitation nurses, plus appropriate administrative and technological support There needs to be closer links between the specialist and GPs to improve preventative work in the community.

Note 2 to Editors: The NHS Executive (North West) writes (6 July 2000): West Midlands based ATM Consulting have been appointed to help the North West Regional Office of the NHS Executive devise a 10-year plan for doubling the number of specialist heart operations performed in the Region's cardiac centres. ATM will study how operating theatres are currently being used in the Region's specialist heart surgery centres in Blackpool, Liverpool and Manchester with a view to advising on how and where improvements may be made in the use of these facilities.

They will also advise on what additional facilities will be needed to achieve targets set by the Government's National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease. 'They will recommend where (and when) the extra capacity should be created.

The National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease sets Health Authorities the goal of achieving 750 coronary artery by-pass grafts (heart by-pass operations) and 750 angioplasties (clearing of blocked arteries) per million of population every year. In the North West Region, this means doubling the number of specialist heart operations over the next 10 years.

There is also an immediate requirement to reduce waiting times and improve access to vital cardiac services, Work has already beginning and resources have been have been made available this year to fund more than 350 extra specialist heart operations. Members of the Reference Group set up to oversee ATM's work include David Peat, Chief Executive, East Lancashire Health Authority.

ATM has been commissioned to advise on the development of specialist cardiac services (interventional cardiology and cardiac surgery). General services for the prevention and treatment of coronary heart disease (e.g. the treatment of heart attacks) will continue to be provided locally.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 147/00 Thursday 6 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR TIGHTENED SECURITY TO CURB THEFT FROM NATIONAL MUSEUMS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling on Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, to review security at the country's national museums and galleries following the release of details of "missing, stolen or otherwise unaccounted for" works of art and other artefacts.

The MP asked Ministers for details of the national treasures which had disappeared over the last decade. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Nothing prepared me for the reply I received from Arts Minister, Alan Howarth. Works of art have been, quite literally, walking through the doors of many of our national institutions. It beggars belief that the Royal Armouries, for example, should lose no fewer than twelve 19th century British Cavalry lances."

"We can't afford to have our heritage nicked."

Note to Editors: works of art and other artefacts missing, stolen or otherwise unaccounted from the DCMS national museums and galleries since 1990:

British Museum: 15 Roman coins; 2 copies of book by Choris Asante; a gold pectoral disc; a Japanese porcelain figure; 2 Meiji period ivory figures; a Namban chest; 2 Persian book covers and a fragment of a gold ring.

Imperial War Museum: 2 Paintings by Stuart Reid, Lieutenant McNamara winning the VC and The Bott Incident; additionally, small items to the value of £12,000,

National Maritime Museum: The following works have been reported as missing to the Police: Dutch Whalers in the ice by Adrian van Salm; Royal Arms with Portraits of Hood and a motto by an unknown artist; A Baltimore Schooner thought to be off Charlestown by an unknown artist; A Blackwall frigate and other vessels by an unknown artist; A 17th Century Scene by

more follows

an unknown artist; A Clipper Before the Wind in the Downs by an unknown artist; A Royal Yacht Leaving Plymouth by William Adolphus Knell; A Ship in a Gale approaching the Lizard by Richard B Spencer; Fishing Boats by
John Fraser; HMS Pursuer: the Hanger with the Wildcats by Stephen Bone; The Barque Ellsworth by an Unknown Artist; The Schooner Yacht Galatea by an unknown artist; The Ship Lock Katrine by Richard B Spencer.

National Gallery: No items to report.

The Victoria & Albert Museum: A Satinwood writing box; 4 furniture handles; a Tortoiseshell box; 4 items of Masonic Regalia; handles and a lock; a Finial of a fire dog; a porcelain cup; a spoon in a case; a pomander, a patchbox, an Etui, a Gold ring; a Snuff box; a Gold mounted tortoiseshell snuff box inlaid with gold; a Pear shaped tortoiseshell powder flask with pique decoration in silver; an Oval tortoiseshell brooch inlaid with gold and silver; a Flat, rectangular tortoiseshell snuff box with gilt and metal sides and rims; an Oval tortoiseshell snuffbox mounted in gold with radiating panels of strapwork and seashells an Oblong tortoiseshell snuffbox with gilt metal sides; a Kindjal sword; a miniature, sewing machine; part of a miniature dessert service; a brass eagle; a Barometer; a Games table; a Panel by Burne-Jones; a Painting of a River Scene; a Mahogany dressing table top, a Fire

screen; 2 bracelets; a Japanese print; an English cavalry sword, an English rapier; a Dutch cavalry sword; a George V & Queen Mary Coronation Mug; a Figure of a Centaur by Francesco Righetti and a Chinese porcelain vase.

National Museum of Science & Industry: A voltage standard chip consisting of multiple Josephson junctions made by Cryogenic Consultants Ltd; the first tube of high-temperature super conducting ceramic made by Basic Volume Ltd; a print taken from a Lithographic stone; A World War 11 airman's Cap & Badge; Soyers Magic Stove, a potable Spirit Stove patented by Alexis Soyer and Alexander Symons; TPO Scissors; a box of locomotive works plates; part of a small bust associated with a machine by Cheverton for reproducing scupture; model of a Nieuport Biplane; a Beechnut vending machine and part of a set of acupuncture needles.

National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside: Black opal chips; Torbanite Crystals; Amethyst Crystals; Garnet Crystals; 2 Kestrel study skins; a Safety Razor: a Button Hook and a clock.

National Portrait Gallery: No items to report.

Natural History Museum: 3 Mineralogy specimens; 23 Zoology specimens; 5 palaeontology specimens and four Entomology specimens.

Royal Armouries: 2 British percussion Coast Guard Pistols, circa 1840; 1 flintlock sea service pistol bayonet, circa 1800; one 19thcentury Martini-Henry Rifle bayonet and twelve 19th century British Cavalry lances.

Tate Gallery: 2 works by JMW Turner, Shade and Darkeness - the Evening of the Deluge and Moses Writing the Book of Genesis and a Koko-Nor II foam sculpture by J Chamberlain.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 148/00 Thursday 6 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP RE-STATES SUPPORT FOR HUNTING BAN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will tell the Commons tomorrow (Friday) that hunting wild mammals with dogs has had its day. He will be speaking in a special adjournment debate called to consider the report of the Burns Inquiry on Huntng with Dogs which reported last month. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, will open the debate.

Note to Editors: The League Against Cruel Sports writes: The (Burns) report lists the number of jobs dependent on hunting but does not say how many will be lost in the event of a ban. A report commissioned for the Committee by Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC) suggested

that job losses could range from just under 5,000 in the worst case to as little as 375 if drag hunting replaces live quarry hunting. The worst case scenario assumes that all hunters simply stop their participation in horse related activities. It is highly unlikely because the clear majority of people who hunt do so as part of their general riding activities. Job losses will be considerably less than 5,000,

The Committee has concluded that in some areas hunting does play a significant part in community and social life. However, these areas are restricted to a few parishes and villages where hunt kennels are based and which are not in the locality of towns. The few areas where hunting has some significance are untypical of rural life in England and Wales. There are more remote communities in Scotland, yet they survive without any of the hunting which mainly takes place on the border with England, The report concedes that even in the villages where hunting makes a higher than average contribution, social activities run by the pub and the church have more importance.

The Countryside Agency report 'The State of the Countryside 1999' lists the 19 main community activities in the English countryside. Hunting is not even mentioned. The report concludes that 'traditional' mounted fox hunting plays no part in keeping numbers down, However, its also concludes that in hilly areas, such as parts of Wales and Cumbria, fox control using dogs does have a role in controlling fox numbers. The anti-hunting Bill introduced by Michael Foster would not have banned the use of dogs to flush foxes out for shooting.

The Committee recognises that hunting itself by the pursuit and eventual death, whether by hounds or after digging out, is cruel. This is the crux of the argument. No matter what the Countryside Alliance claim, it is official - hunting with dogs is cruel.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 149/00 Wednesday 12 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE TO QUIZ BYRES ON NEW 12 POINT PLAN FOR THE TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Industry Secretary, Stephen Byres this afternoon to discuss the implementation of the new National Strategy for the UK's textile and clothing
industry. The Industry Secretary unveiled the plan last month.

The 12 point plan aims to help the industry adapt and improve to meet global changes in the sector.

Speaking from Westminster in advance of the meeting at the DTI HQ in Victoria Street, the MP said: “Textiles are still immensely important to Pendle and East

Lancashire as a whole. We all know the global market for textiles and clothing is changing very rapidly and there have been recent job losses locally as firms struggle to adapt to the changes."

The Pendle MP is secretary of the Parliamentary All Party Textiles and Clothing Group.

Note to Editors: The 12 point plan is as follows: * Support for a new supply chain initiative to establish closer relationships between manufacturers and retailers. This will improve efficiency and flexibility and speed up supply chains, making industry more competitive. Government will work with key industry players on this initiative.
* Extended help for exporters. * Government will establish a Centre of Manufacturing Excellence in textiles at Heriot-Watt and will encourage commercial exploitation of research in textiles, including:

- A Faraday Partnership to encourage collaboration between leading universities, research organisations and industry to provide co-ordinated programmes of research, education and training leading to new products and processes. Three leading universities, Heriot-Watt, Leeds and UMIST together with the British Textiles Technology Group (BTTG) and up to 100 user firms will be involved in such projects.

more follows

- Government support for the development and exploitation of technical textile materials. For example, the development of "smart fabrics" with information and communication technologies like mobile phones, built into the material; and the development of a strong, lightweight, cost-saving material, which could replace side impact bars in cars.

* Encouraging the best British designers and fashion graduates to stay in the UK and develop their talent here with the textile and clothing industry.

* Government will call meetings between the industry and public procurement agencies to discuss the impact of current procurement policy on UK companies and changes that might be made to that policy within the context of our legal obligations.

* Government will work with the British Fashion Council to foster world class design, commercial awareness in our young designers, and design-awareness in our companies. Projects include on-going support for young designers to show at London Fashion Week and DTI-sponsored designer-run workshops to encourage students into all aspects of the industry.

* Support for textile projects under the Engineering Technicians programme to raise the level of technical skills in the industry by building clusters and networks between SMEs. We are also working with the National Training Organisations for textiles and clothing of a range of other skills proposals.

* Government shall target textile and clothing companies and institutions to ensure that they are more fully aware of the opportunities offered by TCS, formerly known as the Teaching Company Scheme.

* Government will consider how to ensure that the Information Society Initiative, which helps small firms benefit from e-commerce, is targeted at textiles firms.

* The Employment Service will deploy its Rapid Response Units

wherever significant textile redundancies occur in the UK, providing a targeted, personal service to help people find new jobs.

* The special arrangements established by the Employment Service in the North East for handling redundancies in the textiles industry, where job losses are often scattered over several factories rather than concentrated at a single plant, will be evaluated and applied wherever they are needed in the UK.

* Government will work with the industry to identify the sector priorities, which should be targeted by the Employment Service's retraining programmes.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

www.gordonprenticemp.com **Member of Parliament for Pendle**

For Immediate Release. No 150/00 Wednesday 12 July 2000

MP EARNS BROWNIE POINTS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be undertaking one of his more pleasurable tasks in Westminster next week. The MP is meeting the 5th Colne Brownies on Tuesday 18 July and giving them a tour of the Houses of Parliament.

The MP said: “I very much enjoy acting as tour guide and I look forward to some testing questions from the brownies. I find that young people usually have a refreshing outlook on the Government and its role and I am always interested to hear their views.”

The following day the Pendle MP is entertaining Pendle Mayor and Mayoress and group as part of their civic visit to London. The group including Mayor, Ian Gilhespy, and Mayoress, his daughter Hazel Gilhespy will be guests of the MP for dinner at the House of Commons.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

www.gordonprenticemp.com **Member of Parliament for Pendle**

For Immediate Release. No 151/00 Wednesday 12 July 2000

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle in June and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,477 - down from 1,506 in May. This represents an unemployment rate of 4.3%. There were 1134 men and 343 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count is down 11,900 on the May figure. Employment has hit another new record and now stands at just under 28,000,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "There are more people in work in Britain today than ever before. The Prime Minister has said that it is possible, for the first time in a generation, to talk about full employment. This is good news but the unemployment rate still varies dramatically in different parts of the country. Clearly, the Government needs to look at ways of reducing this disparity."

Pendle's unemployment rate is below the regional and national rate.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

www.gordonprenticemp.com **Member of Parliament for Pendle**

For Immediate Release. No 152/00 Wednesday 12 July 2000

MP TUNES TO THE AIRWAVES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will soon be tuning his radio into a new local station which hits the airwaves later this month. The station, 2BR, will begin broadcasting 24 hours a day at 8.00am on Tuesday 25 July 2000 on 99.8FM.

The MP said: “Local radio is marvellous. This station is based in Nelson and will transmit to the communities of Burnley and Pendle. Their broadcasts will cover both local and national issues and I am looking forward to hearing what they have to say.”

The Radio Authority advertised a license to broadcast in Pendle and Burnley in May last year and 2BR were successful in their application. The population coverage of the licence is expected to be up to around 175,000 adults aged 15+. The licence will be for a period of eight years from the date the station comes on air.

The MP said: “I know how popular local radio can be. A lot of my constituents will be tuning in to get the local news.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 153/00 Thursday 14 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BOOST DOCTOR NUMBERS IN EAST LANCS says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging Ministers to offer incentives to doctors to practice in East Lancashire to replace the GPs in the area who are set to retire over the next few years.

The MP quizzed Health Minister, John Denham, about the number of GPs who will shortly be hanging up their stethoscopes for good. In the East Lancashire Health Authority area, 15 GPs out of 276 (or 5.4% of the total) are due to retire by 2005. This is the highest percentage in England outside Greater London.

Yesterday, the Minister told the MP: "Although there is no fixed retirement age for general practitioner, they are removed from the health authority medical list on reaching 70 years of age if providing general medical services as a principal. Similarly doctors employed by personal medical services pilots or under the salaried doctor scheme cannot work past the age of 70."

"The available statistics do not take account of GPs who may retire before 70 by choice or for medical or other reasons, nor is any allowance made for those GPs who may exercise the option to retire and so claim their pension and gratuity but who may return to the health authority medical list 28 days later and continue working until they fully retire. In addition there is no retirement age for doctors who return to work as assistants or locums."

The Pendle MP commented: "A lot of money is now going into the NHS locally but, of course, we need the trained doctors to do the business. It is good to know the Health Authority is actively working on the problem."

more follows

BOOST DOCTOR NUMBERS IN EAST LANCS says MP

Note to Editors: The Minister added: "East Lancashire Health Authority is taking a number of initiatives in response to a study by Lancaster University relating to workforce planning for general medical and other primary care staff. The 1998 study Projected data to 2003/4; these data will be reviewed in the near future and extended for a further period. Measures include: • Promoting Personal Medical Services (PMS) pilots where appropriate. There has been a very encouraging response in applications for the third wave of PMS; • Working locally through Primary Care Groups (PCGS) and with the Post Graduate Medical Centre at Manchester University to expand the number of training practices and the number of trainees in East Lancs. Three locally trained general practitioners joined the East Lancashire list last year; • The development of a recruitment package aimed at the NHS in East Lancashire, but with a focus on General Practice; • Ensuring that retiring GPs give as much notice as possible (three months minimum) and to plan a phased approach to retirement where possible; • PCGs are encouraging practices to review their skill mix and examine alternative options for patient care e.g. greater use of nurse practitioners;

The health authority, together with Pendle PCG, is actively addressing the issue of GP retirement and subsequent recruitment. It is using all the above approaches, however, the deployment of one or more PMS pilots is regarded as a particularly appropriate solution for the area.

GPs and equivalents aged 64 or over as at 1 October 1999

North West HAs	Total GPs	GPs 64 or over	% of GPs 64 or over
Bury and Rochdale	210	6	2.9
East Lancashire	276	15	5.4
Liverpool	253	7	2.8
Manchester	278	13	4.7
Morecambe Bay	186	-	1.1
North Cheshire	161	-	0.6
NW Lancashire	248	-	0.8
Salford and Trafford	240	5	2.1
Sefton	145	-	1.4
South Cheshire	387	6	1.6
South Lancashire	164	-	2.4
St Helens and Knowsley	184	6	3.3
Stockport	167	-	1.2
West Pennine	228	8	3.5
Wigan and Bolton	284	12	4.2
Wirral	196	-	1.5
NW Regional office total	**3,605**	**94**	**2.6**

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 154/00 Wednesday 12 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

1 MILLION NEW JOBS

The Government is helping more people off benefit and into work. Figures out today show that a million more people have moved into jobs since the election.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “This represents a major step towards our goal of full employment. When he was Employment Secretary, Michael Portillo predicted that a Labour government would lose a million jobs. One month after that he upped that to 2 million.”

“In fact, under this Government, more people are in work than ever before, with dole queues at a 20-year low.”

Note to Editors: Between 1979 and 1997, under the previous Government, unemployment doubled and hit 3 million. During that period, the UK created fewer jobs than any other major industrial country. One in five households of working age had no-one earning a wage.

The Conservative Opposition wants to axe the New Deal. William Hague thinks 'the New Deal is not the answer' (HoC 9/3/99) and former shadow chancellor Francis Maude called it a 'fraud' and a 'waste of public money'. (HoC 4/11/98)

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 155/00 Wednesday 12 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE PAYS TRIBUTE TO MADAM SPEAKER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today paid tribute to the retiring Speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd. The Speaker - the first woman to hold the job - has connections with Pendle having contested the old Nelson and Colne constituency in the by-election in June 1968 caused by the death of Sydney Silverman. The seat was taken by David Waddington.

Speaking from Westminster this afternoon following the Speaker's announcement, the Pendle MP said: "Betty Boothroyd is a great Speaker and she will be a very difficult act to follow."

The MP added: "In her eight years as Speaker, Betty was always very kind and fair to me."

"Everyone will miss her."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 156/00 Friday 14 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOVERNMENT'S ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN PENDLE AND THE NORTH WEST

The following information is taken directly from the Government's Annual Report web page. Access it on www.annualreport.gov.uk

This is a summary of the information for your area the database currently holds. For the full report, click here. New information will be added and existing figures updated, so do try it out again soon. Here are the results in brief for your area

In Lancashire, there are 4310 infants in classes larger than 30 (11.40% of pupils) - down from 17712 (42.44% of pupils) in 1997.

There are 12,384 people waiting for in-patients operations in your area, compared with 13,173 at the same time in 1997. There are 4,820 people on out-patient waiting lists locally, compared with 1,787 people in March 1998 (the first year the figures were collected).

The average time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders in Lancashire has been cut by 32 days -- a fall of 25.80%

Thanks in part to the New Deal, local long term youth unemployment has fallen by 54.00% in Pendle since 1997

Low inflation and the lowest business tax rates in Europe have helped create 106,000 jobs in North West since 1997.

The site goes on to give further information on education, housing, transport, health, crime, families and prosperity.

Speaking from Westminster after the report was published, the MP said: "In future, I would like to see responsibility for producing the annual report go to an independent body such as National Statistics or the National Audit Office. It would give it greater credibility. That said, it is a useful snapshot."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 157/00 Friday 14 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP WINS PROMISE OF A FREE VOTE FROM BLAIR ON FAR REACHING PROPOSALS TO CHANGE THE WAY PARLIAMENT WORKS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, yesterday won from the Prime Minister the promise of a free vote in the House of Commons on far reaching proposals to change the way Parliament conducts its business. There had been fears that the Government's hostile response in May to the Liaison Committee's report "Shifting the Balance: Select Committees and the Executive" would doom the proposals.

Since he tabled a Commons motion in March which secured the support of 211 MPs, the Pendle MP has been championing the controversial and ground breaking proposals from the Liaison Committee (comprising the Chairs of all the Commons Select Committees) which recommended unanimously that appointments to select committees should be removed from the control of the whips and given to a panel drawn from the Chairs of the committees themselves.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “The very words “Liaison Committee” sound as dry as dust but the proposals, if carried, will have huge consequences for the way in which Parliament does its business - and the way in which it relates to the Government of the day.”

Note 1 to Editors: The following exchange took place on 13 July (Col 1099-1100)
The Prime Minister: ... We have taken major steps to modernise the other place and to improve the ways in which the House can work. I emphasise that the procedures of the House are not matters for the Government or the official Opposition. I want to make one thing clear: they are matters for individual Members of Parliament who exercise their own judgement on a

more follows

PENDLE MP WINS PROMISE OF A FREE VOTE FROM BLAIR

free vote. They are truly matters for the House. If I may say so, following
Madam Speaker's announcement yesterday, we shall elect her successor by a free vote, independently exercised, of the Members of the House...

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): The Liaison Committee report has huge support across the House: 211 Members, the vast majority of them Labour, signed my early-day motion. If the Liaison Committee report is a parliamentary issue rather than a matter for the Government, may we have a free vote on it?

The Prime Minister: There we are. That is the legitimate voice of Back Benchers speaking. [Interruption.] This is a matter for the House, and of course we shall have a position on it.

Mr. Hague: I do not think that the Prime Minister has given a full answer to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice). The hon. Gentleman asked whether, in view of what the Prime Minister had just said about the importance of free votes on House of Commons matters, members of his party could have a free vote on the Liaison Committee report. Opposition Members will have a free vote. Will the Prime Minister do the same as me,
and--as a party leader--undertake to vote in favour of Select Committees no longer being appointed by the Whips, as is suggested in the report?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there will be a free vote, as I have just indicated. No, I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman's proposition with regard to Select Committees. I cannot help pointing out that there were 18 years during which, as it was in office, the right hon. Gentleman's party could have acted. Just as a matter of interest, as he seems to want to pop up at the Dispatch Box, can he tell us whether, when he was a Cabinet Minister, he banged his fist on the table at Cabinet meetings and said "I think these Select Committees should be handled differently"?

Note 2 to Editors: A Commons motion (EDM 476) tabled by the MP has attracted the support of 211 MPs from all parties although a clear majority are Labour. The motion reads:

This House warmly welcomes the first report of the Liaison Committee, published on 2 March, which observes that the membership of select committees is effectively under the control of the whips and that this has led on occasion to long delays is setting up select committees at the start of a Parliament and in replacing members thereafter and that members have been kept off select committees because of their views; agrees that this is wrong in principle; and believes the implementation of the report’s recommendations would strengthen parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive to the positive benefit of both.

Note 3 to Editors: The Leader of the House (Margaret Beckett) confirmed in the debate on the 13th July that there would be a separate debate on the Liaison Committee’s report.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 158/00 Tuesday 18 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP GIVES THUMBS UP TO SPENDING REVIEW

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the Government's three-year spending plans. He says the spending boost will make a real difference to his Pendle constituency.

In the Commons today the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, announced the results of Spending Review 2000 which include plans to increase direct payments to schools, as part of a £10 billion increase in education and training funding across the UK by 2004.

The government will give every primary school in Pendle next year, and every year until 2003-04, a sum ranging from £6,000 to £20,000 for books and other equipment, and between £50,000 to £70,000 for Pendle's secondary schools.

The spending pledges mean next year spending per pupil will have risen by an extra £430 from 1997 levels.

Youth unemployment in Pendle is down by 49% and long-term unemployment cut by 58% since 1997. The Government's spending plans also included new money for transport improvements, the NHS, and a big increase in funding to fight crime.

Speaking from Westminster after the announcement, the MP said: "This is a real shot in the arm for our key public services. The Government is on course to deliver rising prosperity for all."

Note to Editors: The Government has taken tough decisions to create a platform of stability - repaying debt and sticking now, and in the future, to our two tough rules on borrowing. On this platform of stability the

more follows

MP GIVES THUMBS UP TO SPENDING REVIEW

Government is investing in education, health, transport, and law and order, to create a Britain where there is opportunity and security not just for the few, but for all.

From 1979 to 1997, rising debt interest, unemployment and social security accounted for 43% of all public spending. In the coming three years unemployment, social security and debt interest will account for only 17%.

Tough decisions on reducing government borrowing and cutting the costs of social and economic failure mean that the Government can now:

• allocate 75% of the increases in spending on public services to our priorities education, health, transport, housing and law and order.

• provide a record 5.4% above inflation increase in UK education funding on average over next three years - more than three times the average growth of the last Tory government (1.5%).

• increase the range of direct payments to schools next year and every year until 2003-04 for teachers, books and other equipment to £6,000- £20,000 for primary schools and £50,000 - £70,000 for secondary schools.

• do more to achieve full employment by making the New Deal a permanent deal and extending the ONE service to ensure benefit recipients receive better and more work-focused service.

• double public investment in transport to over £6 billion a year to reduce congestion and improve public transport.

• in advance of the NHS National Plan, ensure the longest period of sustained growth for the NHS in its history with an average of 6.1% real terms growth to 2003-2004 - more than double the rate under the Tories.

• invest an average increase in spending on the police of 3.8% a year above inflation over the next three years to cut car crime by nearly a third and burglaries by 25%.

• The Government is spending £2.8 billion a year more on pensioners by next year, and will consult on a Pensioners' Credit later this year. Tax and benefits decisions are for the Budget while the spending review sets overall spending plans for public services.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 159/00 Tuesday 18 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP MEETS AEROSPACE LOBBY AT WESTMINSTER

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told a lobby of aerospace workers from BAe Systems (the former British Aerospace) that big Government grants to leading companies in the sector should come with conditions to protect the jobs of people working here in the UK.

BAe has announced redundancies despite the fact that the company is profitable and received £530 million from the Government to help it finance the cost of the AXX super jumbo.

The MP has also crossed swords with Rolls Royce - a major employer in his Pendle constituency - for cutting its workforce at a time when its order book has never been bigger. RR too has received Government help - £200m in launch aid to help the company develop the hugely successful Trent series of engines.

Speaking at Westminster to a hundred BAe workers from around the country, the MP called for harmonised employment laws within the EU to ensure it was not easier to get rid of employees in the UK. He told the BAe people: "We don't want highly skilled aerospace jobs exported to Poland and other countries in Eastern Europe."

The MP said he would press for an early debate on the aerospace industry. He is visiting the Farnborough Air Show next week and will meet local companies which do work for the prime contractors such as BAe and Rolls Royce.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

www.gordonprenticemp.com **Member of Parliament for Pendle**

For Immediate Release. No 160/00 Thursday 20 July 2000

BLOOMING CHEEK!

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is hoping that the thieves who stole the hanging baskets from outside his office and the one next door in Carr Road, are treating them with care.

The MP said: "My staff have lovingly fed and watered the basket for the month it has been there, only to find that today it had gone, along with the one next door."

He continued: "We thought that the hanging basket, which we purchased from the Council, would brighten up the environment in Nelson. We have had lots of comments from people walking past and it really did cheer the place up. But it seems to have been too great a temptation for some sticky-fingered person."

The hanging basket will be replaced.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 162/00 Monday 24 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP VISITS FARNBOROUGH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting Farnborough International air show tomorrow (Tuesday 25 July) to give support to the local aerospace firms who will be displaying their wares at the showcase event. The MP will also be meeting people from Rolls Royce. The company's two sites in Barnoldswick are big employers in his Pendle constituency. Despite a bulging order book worth £13 billion, the company is, controversially, cutting its workforce. The situation in Barnoldswick is still unresolved.

The MP said: “Farnborough is a crucially important event in the aerospace calendar. It is where planes and products are put through their paces and where orders are signed."

"Aerospace is big business which relies on leading edge technology and I want the North West to be in there at the forefront of new developments. But we’ve got to make sure that our jobs are safe with the new orders. It would be a crazy world if the UK industry landed millions of pounds in new orders - but the jobs went overseas. Aerospace is a global industry. But that doesn’t mean we should sit idly by while UK jobs disappear over the horizon.”

Note to Editors: The Air Show at Farnborough takes place every second year and is expected to attract around 300,000 visitors by the time it ends on Sunday. The UK aerospace industry has a turnover of £17.6 billion a year, while new orders world-wide were last year worth £16.6 billion. Companies in the industry spend about £1.9 billion a year on research and development. Some 154,000 people are directly employed in the industry, with more than 350,000 indirectly employed -- a third of the European total in aerospace. Of the £17.6 billion turnover last year, 40% went on aircraft systems and frames, 22% on aircraft engines and 26% on aircraft equipment. Of the aircraft, 55% were military planes and 18% were large civil aircraft.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 163/00 Monday 24 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SUNDAY LAW "A COMPLETE MESS" says PENDLE MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, told the Commons this afternoon that the law relating to what could or could not be done on a Sunday was in a complete mess. He called on Home Office Minister, Mike O'Brien, to sweep away a raft of antiquated laws that had little relevance to the way people live their lives today.

The Minister agreed that the issue had to be tackled. The Minister had been responding to an earlier question of the liberalisation of Sunday dancing - a matter which had been held up in the House of Lords.

Prentice told the House: "In Pendle, the Barrowford Show next month is for the first time to be held on a Sunday - but the organisers can only do this because they are using only part of the park and not the whole of it because, bizarrely, that would be contrary to the 1890 Public Health Act."

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "I want the Government to comb through the statute book, junking all the hopelessly out-of-date laws. We need a complete overhaul of the law relating to what you can and cannot do on a Sunday."

He added forlornly: "On a Sunday you can pay to listen to music but you can't dance to the music! "

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 164/00 Wednesday 26 July 2000

www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP STUNNED BY CONCORDE CRASH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, spoke today of his shock, horror and bewilderment at the devastating crash in Paris yesterday of an Air France Concorde. The MP had been visiting the aerospace industry's showcase event in Farnborough when news reached him of the tragedy.

Speaking on his return to London, the MP said: "The Concorde crash is simply terrible. It is the stuff of nightmares to be on a plane which has caught fire. We are all thinking of the relatives of the passengers and crew. I hope the cause of this cataclysmic failure of the engine is established very quickly."

"It is hard to believe after something dreadful like this has happened that air travel is the safest form of transport. This sort of thing shocks people to the core."

Note to Editors: The MP has asked ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, what conditions were attached to the grant of £530m to BAe systems in respect of the company's future employment levels in the UK.
The Minister, Alan Johnson, told the MP today: "Conditions in the A3XX launch investment contact, as with all other launch investments, remain commercially confidential. We estimate that the A3XX will create 22,000 new jobs (8,000 in BAe SYSTEMS and the UK supply chain, and 14,000 new induced employment) and safeguard a further 62,000 jobs (20,000 on current Airbus Programmes and 42,000 in induced employment)."

"Launch investment is a risk and revenue sharing Government investment in the design and development of specific civil aerospace projects in the UK. The investment is not a grant and is repayable at a real rate of return, usually via levies on sales of' the product developed."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 165/00 Wednesday 26 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE SOUNDS THE 'ALL CLEAR' AFTER KNOTTS LANE GRENADE DRAMA

Defence Minister, Dr Lewis Moonie, today gave the all clear following the recent drama when an unexploded hand grenade was found in the Knotts Lane area of Colne.

In a letter yesterday to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, the Minister said the site had not been used as an ammunition dump or factory in the past. He went on: "We have no way of knowing therefore how the hand grenade came to be there but, of the possible explanations, the most plausible is that the grenade could have been a personal trophy from a past conflict which the owners thought might be easier to bury than dispose of safely."

Speaking from Westminster, Gordon Prentice, said: "The fact that this part of Colne has not been used as an ammunition dump of munitions factory in the past is immensely reassuring. Clearly, we all hope this hand grenade is a one-off. It is a complete mystery how it got there."

Note to Editors: The Minister wrote to the Pendle MP on 25 July 2000 as follows: "I undertook in my letter of 12 July to provide you with a substantive response once I had completed my investigation into the article that appeared in your local newspaper concerning an unexploded hand grenade in Knotts Lane, Colne. I am now in a position to do so.

My officials have looked into this matter and their research suggests that the site has not been used as an ammunition dump or factory in the past. We have no way of knowing therefore how the hand grenade came to be there but, of the possible explanations, the most plausible is that the grenade could have been a personal trophy from a past conflict which the owners thought might be easier to bury than dispose of safely.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 166/00 Thursday 27 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP HAILS NEW NHS PLAN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has given enthusiastic backing to the Government's radical new plan for the NHS. In the Commons today, the Prime Minister unveiled details of the Plan for the NHS in England.

The PM said that in the past three years: "We have seen real changes in the NHS: 6,000 extra nurses in the last year alone, 38 new hospitals, waiting lists down, every A&E department that needs it revamped and new services like NHS Direct".

The Pendle MP added: "Over the next ten years, the National Plan will mean not just a bigger NHS, but a better NHS. Under the last government, the NHS was run into the ground. Nurse training places were cut, beds were cut, waiting lists shot up and

morale reached an all-time low. We've got a lot of work to do to get the NHS fit for the future. This is a real shot in the arm."

Note to Editors: The PM pledged: More staff. • 20,000 extra nurses; • 7,500 more consultants; • 2,000 extra GPs

Better facilities; • 100 new hospitals; • 7,000 extra beds; • a 'modern matron system' to oversee cleaner wards and better food

Shorter wait… • waiting lists to be replaced with booked appointments; • a GP appointment in 48 hours; • 6 months maximum wait for an operation

Better care: • better long-term care with free nursing care; • expansion in cardiac and cancer care; • 335 rapid response mental health teams

A patient led NHS: • patients' advocates and advisors in every hospital; • proper redress when operations are cancelled on the day they're due: • patients surveys and forums

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 167/00 Thursday 27 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BELCHING COWS A THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT says MP

Belching cows are responsible for producing 25% of methane - a powerful greenhouse gas, according to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

At Agriculture Questions this morning, the Labour backbencher urged the Minister, Nick Brown, to consider subsidising a new, natural, UK invented feed additive which would cut down the burping.

"There is a UK invented feed additive which will cut down on this dreadful belching. Is there not a case in order to encourage farmers to get this innovative product into the market of perhaps a small kick start subsidy or something?"

The Minister Nick Brown said he was always open to new ideas.

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "It beggars belief that cows, with their legendary five stomachs, are responsible for doing so much environmental damage.

“Fortunately, we now have this splendid remedy, concocted by UK scientists. We should promote it like mad and help save the planet.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 168/00 Thursday 27 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR HUSTINGS AT WESTMINSTER TO QUIZ CANDIDATES FOR SPEAKER

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, to act as a go-between or honest broker in organising hustings in Westminster Hall where candidates for Speaker would be grilled by MPs.

In Business Questions, the Pendle MP called on her “to do the unconventional thing” and set up the grilling for the morning of Monday 23 October. The election of the Speaker is the first item of business when the House meets that afternoon at 2.30pm.

Telling the Speaker his proposal was “deadly serious” the MP asked the Leader of the House: "Would you invite, on behalf of all of us, all the candidates to declare themselves this week, so we know who's intending to stand for Speaker?"

He said that in all the centuries there had been a Parliament at Westminster “there had never been more than two candidates proposed for Speaker... Now there is a multiplicity.”

Margaret Beckett replied: "Although I'm grateful and flattered at your suggestion that I might, in some way, act as an honest broker, can I say, I have every intention of resisting as I have from the beginning any attempt to put me in the middle of any of this."

Note to Editors: The following extract dealing with the election of the Speaker is from the 1996 Procedure Committee report:

17, The principal business on the first day of a new Parliament is, as it has been for several centuries, the election of a Speaker. Until 1972 this proceeded according to ancient usages rather than Standing Order. The

more follows

MP CALLS FOR HUSTINGS AT WESTMINSTER TO QUIZ CANDIDATES FOR SPEAKER

Clerk of the House presided. In the event of only one candidate being proposed, he took the Chair without question put. If a second or further candidate was proposed, successive motions were moved, a general debate took place, at the end of which the Clerk put the question that the Member first proposed do take the Chair. The Member first obtaining a majority took the Chair. Prior, to 1971, there were contested elections in, for example, 1835, 1839, 1895, and 1951. In 1835 the question on the Member first proposed was narrowly defeated and the other candidate took the Chair without further division. There is no record of there having been more than two candidates proposed; a third or further motion could presumably have been moved and debated with the other two.

18. As a result of the concern expressed at the lack of consultation preceding the nomination of Mr Selwyn Lloyd as Speaker in January 1971, and the resulting election in which a genuinely unwilling candidate had to be proposed in order for a vote to be held, the then Procedure Committee presented its proposals for change in January 1972, Rather than the Clerk of the House presiding over proceedings, it proposed that the backbench Member with the longest record of continuous service - the Father of the House - should preside in circumstances where the previous Speaker had ceased for whatever reason to be a Member of the House. It also recommended that a question should be put to the House in the event of a single candidate; and that the question on any other candidatures should be put as amendments to the original motion, Whatever the outcome of any vote, this procedure offered the possibility of subsequent unanimous approval of the original Question or of the Question as amended. The Committee's proposals were accepted by the House in August 1972, and are enshirined in Standing Order No 1.

19. The elections of Mr Speaker Thomas in February 1976 and of Mr Speaker Weatherill in June 1983 were unopposed. In April 1992 the new procedure for putting an alternative candidature to the House as an amendment to the motion for the first candidate was brought into operation for the first time. The amendment proposing Miss Boothroyd in place of Mr Brooke was passed by 372 votes to 238, and the Question as amended was agreed to without Division. There was some feeling at the time that discord within the Government side of the House had prevented the emergence of a candidate on that side who might have enjoyed greater support, but that the system of election did not allow that to be put to the test. **We have little sympathy with that view; and the onus is plainly on the parties concerned to agree on their favoured candidate and failure to do so cannot be attributed to procedural obstacles.....**

...We according recommend no change to the current procedures for the election of the Speaker.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

www.gordonprenticemp.com **Member of Parliament for Pendle**

For Immediate Release. No 169/00 Friday 28 July 2000

TOPPING UP THE HOLIDAY TAN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, wants tighter regulations on sunbeds and their use. The most recent government-financed survey showed that 1 in 4 people between the ages of 16 and 24 used a sunbed in 1994. Sunbeds are widely used in the UK for cosmetic purposes to pre-tan before summer holidays or to top-up a tan on return.

This week Health Minister, Yvette Cooper, told the MP that there were no current plans to amend legislation and that the use of sunbeds was a matter of personal choice. Significantly, the Minister added that people should be aware their use entails exposure to ultraviolet radiation and there is strong evidence this is a cause of skin cancer.

Gordon Prentice said: "Sunbeds are very popular and there are salons springing up in every town but people need to know what the risks are. As there is no legislation covering the use of sunbeds the only way of informing people is through public awareness campaigns."

The view of the British Photodermatology Group is that the use of UVA sunbeds for cosmetic tanning should be discouraged. People, who despite this advice, want to use UVA sunbeds should not exceed two courses a year each of no more than 10 sessions. Experts have also criticised the way that many sunbeds are to be found in health and fitness centres reinforcing the message that a tan is healthy.

The MP added: "This isn't about being nannyish, these precautions are just common sense. As with exposure to natural sunlight, too much exposure to ultra violet radiation from tanning equipment can damage your skin and sometimes your general health. We can all be sensible about this"

He concluded: "I want to see the regulations on sunbeds reviewed."

more follows.....

TOPPING UP THE HOLIDAY TAN

Note to Editors: The general precautions from the Health and Safety Executive include:
• Don't use cosmetic tanning equipment if your skin is particularly sensitive.
• Don't use cosmetics before tanning
• Tan gently - don't exceed the recommended time or have too many tanning sessions.
• Seek advice about any problems
• Protect your eyes - make sure you use goggles
• Understand the equipment - make sure you use the equipment properly
• Don't rely on you tan for protection

• Know your skin - learn to recognise the early warning signs such as progressively changing moles and other skin discoloration's.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 170/00 Monday 31 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

POLICE ASSAULTS

A staggering 33,866 police working days were lost in 1998/9 as a result of injuries sustained by police officers according to figures given to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, yesterday by Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke.

The areas with the highest percentage of police working days lost to assault are South Wales (0.37%) followed by North Wales (0.32%), Northumbria (0.31%) and West Yorkshire (0.28%). The forces with the fewest days lost are Suffolk and Hampshire (both 0.01%). The England and Wales average is 0.12%.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "The difference between police forces is very marked. Why there should be this huge variation is a mystery to me. It may be we have more "have-a-go" police officers in some areas than others."

"Judging from the bald statistics, Wales is a pretty hazardous place to be a police officer."

In Lancashire there were 1,127 days lost (0.15%). The average strength of the Lancashire force is 3,331.

Note to Editors: Table attached

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 171/00 Friday 28 July 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CANDIDATES FOR SPEAKER TO BE INVITED TO COMMONS HUSTINGS

Labour backbencher, Gordon Prentice, is organising a hustings for candidates for Speaker on the morning of Monday, 23 October - the day the House returns after the long summer recess. Committee room 10 has been booked for the purpose.

The election of the new Speaker is the first item of business at 2.30pm.

A letter is to go to all the declared candidates for Speaker inviting them to the meeting. As of this morning (Friday 28th July) 103 MPs from all parts of the House have agreed to put their name to the letter of invitation. More names are expected to be added before the formal invitation goes out to candidates in September.

The list of MPs includes Ministers, former Ministers, Chairs of Select Committees and PPSs.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the Pendle MP said: “There is a widespread feeling that the procedures for electing the Speaker are unsatisfactory. I hope all the candidates will respond positively to the invitation.”

“It’s an offer they can’t refuse.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 172/00 Tuesday 1 August 2000

www.gordonprenticemp.com

PHOTO CALL 10.30 am on Thursday 3 August at 15, Swinden Hall Rd., Nelson

90 HAPPY RETURNS TO NELSON'S FIRST WOMAN MAYOR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice will be wishing long standing Labour Party Member, Elizabeth Landless, a very happy 90th Birthday Thursday 3 August.

Mrs. Landless of 15, Swinden Hall Road, Nelson was Nelson's first woman Mayor back in 1958/59 and she has done long sterling duty as a local Magistrate.

Mr. Prentice, speaking from his constituency office said: "Elizabeth has contributed much during her long life, both to the Labour Party and to the local community and it is wonderful that I can join her in celebrating her 90th birthday. What changes she must have seen! I shall be going to see her on Thursday to wish her a very happy birthday and, I hope, many more to come.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 173/00 Tuesday 1 August 2000

STUDENT GETS WORK EXPERIENCE WITH MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will have extra pair of hands at his constituency office soon in the shape of Zaheer Abbas, a student from Edge End High School. He turns up for duty on 14 August.

Zaheer, who lives on Hibson Road in Nelson, will be starting his final year at school when he returns in August. The MP was approached by the Work Experience Office at Easter to ask if Zaheer could gain an insight into how a politician spends his time whilst in the constituency and the MP was pleased to oblige and invited Zaheer to join him during the summer recess.

Zaheer will have a busy timetable as Mr Prentice is taking him along to his constituency visits that week including meetings with the chair of the East Lancashire Health Authority and the PPWA and visits to the new local radio station 2BR and local companies.

Gordon Prentice said: “Not only is Zaheer joining me on my visits he will also be doing some of the paperwork in the office for me such as research for forthcoming meetings and help with the odd press release or two! Zaheer is going to experience at first hand a week in the life of an MP.”

The MP takes work experience students every year during the summer recess.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 174/00 Wednesday 2 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP RIDICULES SUGGESTION THAT COUNTRYSIDE BILL MAY BE LOST

Speculation that the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill may be lost, after peers tabled more than 300 amendments to it, have been ridiculed by the long-standing right to roam campaigner, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, the MP said: “There is no good reason why the Countryside Bill should be thrown overboard to meet the self imposed deadline of a November Queen’s Speech. Erskine May makes it clear that the duration of a session is determined by the Government.”

“Apart from election years, the Queen’s Speech falls in October or November but there is no requirement that it must - it is simply a convention. Indeed, before 1928, the State Opening of Parliament was either in January or February.”

“There are also precedents for sitting during the summer. This happened in 1909 when both Houses dealt with the so-called People’s Budget. The Lords sat intermittently in August and from 13 September onwards. In 1926, both Houses sat on various dates during August and September.”

"The Government has a huge majority and a five year mandate. The notion that a "modernising" Government should cling to this November tradition and abandon a flagship Bill is preposterous."

The MP added: "The current session should run for as long as it takes to get the Countryside Bill onto the statute book."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 175/00 Wednesday 2 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BARLICK GALA

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining in the fun of the fair at this Saturday's Barnoldswick Millennium Gala. East Enders' Dot Cotton is the star attraction.

The MP, who lives in the town, is a great supporter of the Gala which has been raising money for local charities for over a quarter of a century.

The MP said: "The Barlick Gala is always a great day out and, once again, the local round table who organise the event deserve a big round of applause for making it happen. Organising a major event like this is a huge job."

The procession leaves the Foster's Arms, Gisburn Road soon after noon. Dot Cotton (aka actress June Brown) will officially open the Gala at 1.30pm.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 176/00 Thursday 3 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP PASSES BLOOD CHOLESTEROL TEST

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, braved the rigours of a blood cholesterol test at Westminster as a way of demonstrating his support for the work of the Institute of Biomedical Science whose members work in hospitals across the UK. They analyse and sample blood and tissues and carry out a hundred and one other scientific procedures.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, the MP said: "I am told my cholesterol level is normal and that's a huge relief because I do like the occasional cream cake! The test itself is the merest pin prick on the index finger so no-one should be deterred from having it done."

"The members of the IBMS carry out essential medical tests for the NHS and are its unsung heroes."

IBMS Chief Executive, Alan Potter, said: "I am grateful to Mr Prentice for his time and support and his willingness to listen to the concerns of the Institute, particularly those of recruitment and retention."

Note to Editors: Photo shows the MP having a sample of blood taken from his index finger.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 177/00 Thursday 3 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP HAILS SUCCESSFUL SRB BID

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today congratulated the Pendle Partnership and everyone involved in putting together the successful Single Regeneration Budget round 6 bid which will
pour millions of pounds into Pendle over the next few years.

The MP said: “The Time is Now for Nelson” bid prepared by Pendle Partnership was an excellent piece of work. It is great news it succeeded. The Pendle Partnership is building a great track record in delivering the goods for the area.”

Last year, the “Opening Doors” bid prepared by Pendle Partnership also won through - as did anther bid prepared by the East Lancashire Partnership focusing on Pendle’s rural areas.

Note to Editors: This is a seven year scheme targeting central Nelson and Brierfield. It aims to support planned housing improvements in Nelson with a package of measures to improve health, reduce crime, improve the local environment and encourage new small businesses. Outside this core area, activity will focus on new development sites and linking employment opportunities that these bring with the target communities.

Last year’s successful “Opening Doors, Unlocking Opportunities”
7 year bid targeted the five most deprived wards in Pendle to support community capacity building and enterprise, improve skill levels, health and access to jobs. The “Enterprising Rural Communities” bid, also for 7 years, addresses the key problems of the County’s rural areas such as Pendle.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 178/00 Tuesday 8 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BRADLEY AND WHITEFIELD WARDS GET HUGE £1.6m CASH INJECTION TO HELP PRE-SCHOOL KIDS

The Government’s “Sure Start” initiative is to inject £1,677,254 over the next three years into the Bradley and Whitefield wards of Nelson to help the wards’ 750 children under four get a good start in life.

The aim of Sure Start, says the Government, “is to work with parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of pre-school children - particularly those who are disadvantaged - to ensure they are ready to flourish when they get to school.”

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: “I am absolutely delighted. This is another significant boost for two of Pendle’s most deprived wards.”

Note to Editors: The Education Secretary, David Blunkett, wrote to the Pendle MP on 4 August as follows: "Pendle was one of the districts we invited to draw up proposals for a second wave Sure Start programme. The programme is based in the wards of Bradley and Whitefield, which are covered by your constituency. The local community formed a partnership, which has been working extremely hard consulting local people and putting together a detailed plan of the services they need to ensure the children there have the chance of a good start in life.

We have now approved the Sure Start Pendle plan and agreed a grant for the programme of £1,677,254 over the next three years. The partnership can start to roll out its services to 750 children under four and their families living in the area and, in doing so, contribute to the Government's aims of improving the health and well-being of families and young children and supporting parents to nurture and care for their children and develop their readiness to learn.

Officials from the Sure Start Unit are writing to the partnership to let them know and they will also be on hand to provide any support or guidance the

more follows

programmes may need. I know you too will want to give the programme and those working on it - who will include parents and other residents
from within the local community itself - your full support."

Note 2 to Editors: Sure Start aims to improve the health and well-being of families and children before and from birth, so children are ready to flourish when they go to school. It does this by:

* setting up local Sure Start programmes to improve services for families with children under four
* spreading good practice learned from local programmes to everyone involved in providing services for young children.

Sure Start is a cornerstone of the Government's drive to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. It is based on firm evidence of what works. By 2002, there will be at least 250 Sure Start local programmes. They will be concentrated in neighbourhoods where a high proportion of children are living in poverty and where Sure Start can help them to succeed by pioneering new ways of working to improve services.

Local programmes will work with parents and parents-to-be to improve children's life chances through better access to: Family support; Advice on nurturing; Health services; Early learning

The Government is investing £452 million in Sure Start for the period 1999-2000 to 2001-02. The programme's objectives include supporting early bonding between parents and their children, helping families to function and by enabling the early identification and support of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Among the targets for the programme, the Government wants to see • a 10 per cent reduction in children re-registered on a child protection register; • 5 per cent reduction in proportion of low birth-weight babies; • a 10 per cent reduction in children admitted to hospital as an emergency during their first year of life with gastro-enteritis, a respiratory infection, or a severe injury.

In addition, at least 90 per cent of children with normal speech and language development at 18 months and 3 years. 100 per cent of children in Sure Start areas to have access to good quality play and early learning opportunities, helping progress towards early learning goals when they get to school.

The design and content of local Sure Start programmes will vary according to local needs. But the Government expects all programmes to include a number of core services such as outreach and home visiting; support for families and parents; support for good quality play, learning and childcare experiences for children; primary and community health care, including advice about family health and child health and development; support for children and parents with special needs, including help getting access to specialised services.

Note 3 to Editors: Further information is on the Sure Start web site - www.surestart.gov.uk

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 179/00 Tuesday 8 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CANDIDATES FOR SPEAKER ACCEPT INVITATION TO HUSTINGS

Would be Speakers of the House of Commons, Sir Patrick Cormack MP and John McWilliam MP, have accepted an invitation to a hustings on the morning of Monday 23 October organised by Labour backbencher, Gordon Prentice.

The unprecedented event will take place on the day the House returns after the long summer recess and just before the Commons re-convenes to elect a Speaker to follow Betty Boothroyd. Committee room 10 has been booked for the purpose.

Prentice's letter - backed by over 100 MPs from all parts of the House - went to all the aspirant Speakers-to-be who had publicly declared their candidatures by 31 July. These are: Alan Beith MP, Sir Patrick Cormack MP, Gwyneth Dunwoody MP, Sir Alan Hazelhurst MP, Michael Lord MP, John McWilliam MP, Michael Martin MP, Richard Shepherd MP and Nicholas Winterton MP.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the Pendle MP said: "I am looking forward to hearing from all the candidates in due course but these early acceptances are encouraging. The hustings will go ahead as planned."

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP's letter of 31 July reads: "I am writing on behalf of the colleagues below to invite you to a hustings in Committee Room 10 at the Commons on the morning of Monday 23 October 2000. The precise time is being left open for the moment until we see how many candidates are still in the field at that time. I very much hope you will be able to accept this invitation and perhaps you could get back to me. It may well be that other candidates will, in due course, declare themselves and I shall be writing to them in similar terms. I expect the hustings to be chaired by a very senior backbencher."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 180/00 Tuesday 8 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MONEY TO BURN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, confessed today to astonishment when he was told by Treasury Minister, Melanie Johnson, that over £10 billion of Bank of England notes were destroyed in the year to June 2000.

Pendle's inquisitive MP wanted to know how much money was taken out of circulation every year because it was worn out.

The MP quipped: "The Government clearly has got money to burn. I have tried to visualise what this mountain of bank notes must look like but it defeats me. You could probably carpet the constituency with it. A nice idea!"

The MP added: "I have been pressing Ministers to introduce plastic bank notes of the kind used in Australia. They do eventually wear out but they stay in good shape for much longer than the traditional notes"

The face value of Bank of England notes destroyed in the 12 month period to June 2000 was:

£5	£1,369 million
£10	£3,177 million
£20	£5,022 million
£50	£10,008 million

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 181/00 Tuesday 8 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP TO VISIT TRAWDEN SHOW

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting the Trawden Show this Sunday (13 August).

Speaking from his constituency office earlier today, the MP said: "The Trawden Show is always a great day out. I always enjoy it. I am looking forward to it immensely."

The main attraction this year is the novelty sheepdog display.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 182/00 Monday 14 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES BOOST IN POLICE NUMBERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcome the big boost in police numbers announced last Friday (11 August). Police forces across England and Wales heard how the 4,000 new police officers are to be allocated. Lancashire will get an additional 100 police officers - over and above those already announced.

The funding will expand the Crime Fighting Fund by 4,000 additional recruits, from the current 5,000 over two years, to 9,000 over three years. These recruits will be over and above the numbers forces had otherwise planned to recruit over the period.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "This is what we want to hear. More money for more police on the beat. It is up to the police now to make sure the new officers are used effectively. We want to see a crack down on crime."

Last Friday in Nelson, the MP discussed the announcement with members of the Lancashire branch of the Police Federation.

Notes for Editors: The Spending Review, announced by the Chancellor on 18 July 2000, said that overall police spending was planned to rise by 3.8% a year in real terms over the next three years – a total of £9.3 billion for the police in 2003/04.

The extra money announced in the Spending Review will fund the recruitment of an extra 4,000 officers and fund the continued employment of recruits throughout the period of the settlement. This is a major expansion from 5,000 recruits over two years to 9,000 over three years.

The Government and the public will want to see results - reduction in crime, with more offenders being brought to justice. In order to get their full allocation of officers for the second and third years forces will have to meet continuation criteria covering efficiency gains, crime reduction

more follows

MP WELCOMES BIG INCREASE IN POLICE NUMBERS

targets, police officer sickness absence and ethnic minority recruitment.

ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL 4,000 RECRUITS				
Region	**Force**	**Allocation**		
		Year 2 2001/02	Year 3 2002/03	Total
North East				
	Cleveland	19	27	46
	Durham	8	38	46
	Northumbria	36	82	118
N West & Merseyside				
	Cheshire	11	50	61
	Cumbria	8	26	34
	Greater Manchester	9	201	210
	Lancashire	26	74	100
	Merseyside	17	114	131
Yorkshire & Humberside				
	Humberside	14	49	63
	North Yorkshire	18	25	43
	South Yorkshire	27	69	96
	West Yorkshire	67	94	161
East Midlands				
	Derbyshire	3	54	57
	Leicestershire	19	38	57
	Lincolnshire	6	29	35
	Northants	11	26	37
	Notts	18	52	70
West Midlands				
	Staffordshire	17	46	63
	Warwickshire	5	24	29
	West Mercia	20	43	63
	West Midlands	42	171	213
Eastn				
	Bedfordshire	4	31	35
	Cambs	18	24	42
	Essex	29	65	94
	Hertfordshire	25	37	62
	Norfolk	16	31	47
	Suffolk	7	31	38
London				
	City of London	15	15	30
	Met Police	249	682	931
Sth Est				
	Hampshire	26	84	110
	Kent	28	76	104
	Surrey	16	40	56
	Sussex	21	73	94
	Thames Valley	19	106	125
Sth W				
	Avon & Somerset	17	77	94
	Devon & Cornwall	18	79	97
	Dorset	9	30	39
	Gloucestershire	12	22	34
	Wiltshire	7	29	36
Wales				
	Dyfed Powys	13	16	29
	Gwent	6	32	38
	North Wales	4	38	42
	South Wales	40	50	90

TOTAL		1,000	3,000	4,000

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 183/00 Monday 14 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP AND HEALTH CHIEF IN TALKS ON NEW NHS PLAN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, and recently appointed chair of the East Lancashire Health Authority, Kath Reade, met today at the Health Authority's Lomeshaye HQ in Nelson to discuss the local implementation of the NHS National Plan unveiled by the Prime Minister last month. The plan envisages a real terms increase in the NHS budget of over 6% a year.

Speaking after the meeting, the MP said: "We discussed the possible future shape of the NHS locally with the creation of Primary Care Trusts and we also discussed ways of making the health service the patient's friend. In a big organisation patients inevitably can sometimes been seen as numbers."

The MP added: "I am concerned about getting new doctors and dentists and other health service personnel into the area and what incentives we might be able to offer. The NHS is getting a huge injection of cash and everyone wants to see it get a new lease of life. The NHS was born over 50 years ago. It is right that we should look again at some of the practices which have remained unchanged over such a long period."

Note to Editors: The PM pledged: More staff. • 20,000 extra nurses; • 7,500 more consultants; • 2,000 extra GPs
Better facilities; • 100 new hospitals; • 7,000 extra beds; • a 'modern matron system' to oversee cleaner wards and better food
Shorter wait… • waiting lists to be replaced with booked appointments; • a GP appointment in 48 hours; • 6 months maximum wait for an operation
Better care: • better long-term care with free nursing care; • expansion in cardiac and cancer care; • 335 rapid response mental health teams
A patient led NHS: • patients' advocates and advisors in every hospital; • proper redress when operations are cancelled on the day they're due: • patients surveys and forums

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 184/00 Tuesday 15 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PPWA GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, last night dropped into the headquarters of the Pendle Pakistan Welfare Association for a briefing on the latest developments following the successful Single Regeneration Budget round 6 bid.

The PPWA, set up a decade ago, now employs 10 full time and 6 part time staff. Chair of the PPWA, Dr Ikram Malik, brought the MP up to date on their current work and new initiatives. There are ten separate community projects including the promotion of economic development, the homework centres and disability information.

The MP said: "I am hugely impressed by not only the scope of work done by the PPWA but their excellent facilities. The new computer suite is great and the homework classes are extremely popular."

However, Dr Malik expressed concern about a number of issues. He mentioned the inadequate range of jobs available locally and the high level of unemployment in certain areas. He also talked about the need to provide for people with mental health problems and a day care centre for the elderly. Steps to increase women's participation in the workforce were also raised.

Speaking after the 2 hour meeting the MP said: "I am pressing for a University in East Lancs which is sorely needed. This would bring a great range of good quality employment to the area."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 185/00 Tuesday 15 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MEDICAL HELP A PHONE CALL AWAY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today predicted that the revolutionary NHS Direct service would become an essential complement to existing medical provision in Pendle. NHS Direct is a telephone service staffed by nurses giving confidential healthcare advice and information 24 hours a day. NHS Direct is now available to over 65% of the population of England and will cover the entire country by the end of October 2000.

The MP said: "I know from experience that not everyone wants to bother their local doctor with every ache and twinge. However, it will be tremendous if people can just lift up the phone and voice their concerns and get immediate advice."

NHS Direct gives out general information about local health services - such as late night pharmacies or out of hours dentists - or simply a leaflet about a health condition.
The phone number is available 24 hours a day 0845 4647. NHS Direct is also available on the internet at ww.nhsdirect.nhs.uk.

Note to Editors: NHS Direct started in Pendle on 1 August this year.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 185/00 Wednesday 16 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP PUTS HIS 'CHRISTMAS' CARDS ON THE TABLE! (this headline has been changed)

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is running a competition to design his House of Commons Christmas card this year. The MP has written to all the primary schools in Pendle asking them if the pupils would like to design a Christmas Card for him.

The MP said: “I normally send out cards printed and published by the House of Commons authorities but I thought it would be good to do something different this year!”

The winning design will be professionaly printed by a local firm and around 1000 cards will be sent out. The winning child’s name and school will be on the card. There will be prizes donated by local companies for the top four entrants and each child whose entry is submitted will receive a certificate.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 187/00 Wednesday 16 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PAKISTAN INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH : MP CALLS FOR MORE ROLE MODELS FOR GIRLS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, joined hundreds of others at the Civic Hall in Nelson last night to celebrate the Independence of Pakistan 53 years ago. The MP said Britain’s relationship with Pakistan was deep and long-standing. He told the audience: “We are old friends and modern partners”.

Sharing the platform with the Pendle MP was his colleague from Burnley, Peter Pike, and the chief guest, the Pakistan Consul in Manchester, Jamil Ahmed Khan. The Mayors of Pendle, Burnley and Brierfield and other leading community figures completed the line up.

In his speech, the MP listed local matters of local concern such as the barriers into employment facing young Asian people. He mentioned a recent survey commissioned for the Pendle Partnership which showed that for many young people training was often seen as not being worthwhile. There were other important issues such as increasing women's participation in the workforce.

He told the meeting last night there was a need for more female role models. “Girls have to see women in positions of authority and influence. Boys have got an endless number of role models.”

The Pendle MP told the gathering that, over the years, people from Pakistan had made a huge and beneficial impact here in Britain. “It is not just the doctors and the accountants and the professionals but people from all walks of life who are making a tremendous contribution.”

more follows

PAKISTAN INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH :

“Pakistan's population is 130 million now but in 2025 it is projected to be about 270 million - not far short of the United States today. So there are huge challenges ahead in eradicating poverty and creating a prosperous future for the country. What happens there concerns us here for we live in a global village. We are all neighbours now.”

The MP closed with a few words about Kashmir. He said there could be no long term peace in the region and no prosperity without a resolution of the conflict in Kashmir.

The MP referred to the conflict in Northern Ireland which had been going on for thirty years and only now was there light at the end of the tunnel.

The MP said: “The crucial difference is this. Britain has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland. If the people there want to break away from the rest of the UK they can. They can vote to do so.”

“The Indians regard Jammu and Kashmir as part and parcel of the Indian Union. But we should give the people living there the right to decide their own future. There should be (want *sic*) a plebiscite as promised in UN resolutions.”

The MP said India’s ambitions to join the UN Security Council as a permanent member should not be allowed so long as that country was in breach of UN resolutions.”

“India says the UN resolutions have been overtaken by events and that the starting point is the Simla agreement of 1972 which committed both countries to bi-lateral talks.”

The MP added: “That is no way forward. We need to involve actively the international community to help broker a solution to this bloody conflict which has claimed too many lives for too long.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 188/00 Tuesday 22 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP URGES GOVERNMENT TO SET UP "UNIVERSITY OF EAST LANCASHIRE"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is stepping up his campaign to get a university established in East Lancashire. He says there are few other regions in the UK as big as East Lancs - with a population of 500,000 - which do not have their own local university.

Speaking from his Nelson office earlier today, the MP said: "Universities generate a halo effect with high tech companies clustering round them. We need highly skilled, well paid jobs in this area and a University is just the sort of institution that can attract them."

Last Friday at a meeting in Preston, the MP floated his ideas with Malcolm McVicar, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Central Lancashire. The MP is now in touch with Ministers to see how the proposal can best be taken forward.

In a letter this week to the Pendle MP, Mr McVicar promised the MP sight of a draft "East Lancashire strategy" within a few weeks.

The MP said: "East Lancashire is bursting with talent. I want to see good, high quality jobs being created here."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 190/00 Wednesday 23 August 2000

www.gordonprenticemp.com

DENTISTS IN SHORT SUPPLY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is responding to recent press reports that people in Pendle are still finding it difficult to register with an NHS dentist. He has taken the issue up with Health Minister, Alan Milburn.

The MP said: “Dental health in East Lancashire is amongst the worst in the country. The Government is pouring millions of pounds into NHS dentistry but people in Pendle are still having problems in finding a dentist. I am pressing the Minister for extra dental provision for all of Pendle.”

The problem of bad teeth was recently highlighted in a document produced by Pendle Partnership. The report noted that the number of 5 year olds with decayed, missing or filled teeth (1995-1996) was 4.1. The objective was to bring this figure down to the Borough average of 2.41. East Lancashire Health Authority, along with Sure Start Pendle and Pendle Primary Care Group have been looking at provision for an extra dentist in Nelson.

The MP said: “This is good news but we need dentistry cover for the whole of Pendle, from West Craven through to Brierfield.
The Department of Health has been working on a comprehensive strategy for dentistry in England and the White Paper is expected to be published this autumn.”

The MP concluded: “The White Paper should go a long way to address the problem here by creating a framework to make sure that anyone who wants NHS dentistry can get it.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 191/00 Wednesday 23 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ACCESS TO COUNTRYSIDE MARCHES ON

Local MP and Right to Roam campaigner, Gordon Prentice, has ridiculed the suggestion that the Government is going to abandon the Countryside and Rights of

Way Bill. The Bill is to be considered by the House of Lords on 3 October and the Peers have tabled over 300 amendments to the Bill in an attempt to wreck its passage.

The Pendle MP is the long-standing champion on the Right to Roam and has spent over 2 months on the Committee stage of the Bill during its time in the Commons.

The MP said: "This is not the kind of Bill that is going to fall by the wayside. In Pendle we are surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside and I am determined that the public will have the right to walk on open, uncultivated land."

Next month the MP has been invited by the Ramblers Association to make a keynote speech at a major rally in Durham.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 191/00 Wednesday 23 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP WELCOMES NEW "DEPRIVATION INDEX"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the publication this week of a new index of deprivation which the Government will use as a major way of allocating resources to deprived areas.

The MP, speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, said: "The figures show that Pendle - or rather parts of it - are significantly disadvantaged. This merely confirms the evidence of our own eyes. We know that much of the housing round here is of a lamentable standard. We are living with the legacy of an industrial past. We also know that wage levels here are lower than elsewhere. This new index of deprivation may well steer additional help to the area and that is a good thing."

The MP continued: "We have already been successful with our SRB round 6 bid which is worth millions and we are also getting help through the Sure Start programme which will pump £1.6 million into two deprived wards in Nelson."

The report from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions gives a detailed analysis of deprivation across the country. It shows that severe deprivation and affluence can sit alongside each other in many places.

Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, commented: "These indices remind us that the differences within regions are at least as great as the differences between them. This is why so many of our policies are targeted at the local and neighbourhood level."

The DPM added: "The Index will be a vital tool in helping the Government tackle social exclusion and create strong, sustainable communities. Regional Development Agencies and our other

more follows

PENDLE MP WELCOMES NEW "DEPRIVATION INDEX"

regional policies are beginning to have a positive impact on combating the economic disparities between and within regions. The Government showed its confidence in the RDAs in the last month's Spending Review, which committed to give them an extra £500 million a year by 2003/04, taking the annual budget up to £1.7 billion."

Note to Editors: The documents can be accessed on the DETR web-site (www.detr.gov.uk) from which the following information is taken: In December 1998, the DETR commissioned the University of Oxford to carry out a review of the previous 1998 Index of Local Deprivation in the light of (various) criticisms of the 1998 ILD... The ID 2000 is based on six separate 'domains' of deprivation: • Income. • Employment. • Health Deprivation and Disability. • Education, Skills and Training. • Housing. • Geographical Access to Services.

The Index is based on the premise that multiple deprivation is made up of separate dimensions, or 'domains' of deprivation. These domains reflect different aspects of deprivation. Each domain is made up of a number of indicators which cover aspects of this deprivation as comprehensively as possible. The criteria for selecting the indicators are that they should be statistical... The domains and indicators in the ID 2000 are as follows:

Income: The Income domain measures people who are on a low income. We consider income deprivation to be one of the most important aspects of deprivation.

Employment: 'Employment deprived' are defined as those who want to work but are unable to do so through unemployment, sickness or disability. The domain measures forced exclusion from the world of work. This is seen as a separate deprivation from the income deprivation to which lack of employment may lead.

Health Deprivation and Disability: This domain identifies people whose quality of life is impaired by either poor health or disability. While ill health is closely intertwined with other aspects of deprivation, it is also
an important aspect of deprivation in its own right. Premature death is the ultimate manifestation of this, but chronic ill health and disability will also greatly impair the quality of people's lives.

Education, Skills and Training: This domain measures education deprivation in as direct a way as possible. This is predominantly measured by lack of qualifications amongst adults and children of different ages in a local area. Indicators of children aged 16 and over who are not in full time education and the proportion of 17 year olds who have not successfully applied for higher education have also been included.

Housing: This domain identifies people living in unsatisfactory housing, and, in the extreme case, homelessness.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 192/00 Wednesday 30 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BARLICK BUS SERVICE FALLS SHORT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing bus operators Stagecoach to review their decision to withdraw the X43 service from Barnoldswick to Manchester. The move comes following a large number of complaints from his constituents in Barlick.

The MP, who lives in the town, said: "This all boils down to money. It is well known fact that some of the rural bus routes aren't money spinners for the bus operators, but there should still be an obligation on their part to provide a comprehensive service for all passengers. I know that for many people buses are a lifeline and we should do all we can to ensure that people are able to travel easily to where they need to go."

He continued: "The withdrawal of the X43 service means that travellers from Barlick to Manchester must first make their way to Colne, Nelson or Burnley before joining the Manchester bus. The same applies on the return journey and I know that some of my more elderly constituents find this disruption to their journey more than a bit inconvenient."

The MP has also written to Lancashire County Council to find out if Stagecoach have been in touch about the possibility of subsidising the unprofitable route.

The MP concluded: "It was a drastic step to completely withdraw the X43 Barnoldswick to Manchester service, even a limited daily service would have been better than that."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 193/00 Wednesday 30 August 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

"SWITCH IT OFF" SAYS MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is committed to 'switching off' when he leaves his constituency office at the end of a hard days work. Research released today by the Department of the Environment campaign 'are you doing your bit?' revealed that by leaving unnecessary lights or computer monitors on could be contributing to an overall £150 million worth of electricity wasted each year in England's offices.

The MP said: "The figures are staggering! Office workers who leave their computer monitors switched on are wasting enough electricity, over a two-week break, to print the Complete Works of Shakespeare 16 times!"

He continued: "Here in Pendle our main holiday period is over, but we can all start now to make a change to save energy.
Small actions such as turning off the photocopier, monitors and printers at night and over the weekend will help."

The research pointed out that this wasted energy contributes to damaging the environment as it adds to climate change. The 'are you doing your bit' campaign is a DETR initiative that aims to encourage people to take simple everyday actions to help protect their local and global environment.

The MP concluded: "I for one will be doing my bit and I encourage everyone else to do the same. A quick look around before you leave the office to check there is nothing on that doesn't need to be on can make such a difference."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 194/00 Wednesday 7 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES NEW RIGHTS FOR HOME SHOPPERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has today welcomed new Regulations for Home Shopping Consumers announced by the DTI this week. The regulations cover goods

and services purchased by phone, mail order, fax or via the internet and will come into force on 31 October 2000.

The MP said: “In Pendle, thousands of us now buy from catalogues and over the phone and with the popularity of buying products on the internet increasing daily, it is important that all consumers are protected and made aware of their rights.”

Minister for Europe, Helen Liddell, said: “The Distance Selling Regulations provide statutory backing for the good business practices which many companies already observe and to ensure that this best practice is followed by all.”

The regulations include:
• The right to receive clear information about the goods or services before deciding to purchase
• Confirmation of this information in writing, fax or e.mail
• The right to receive goods or services within 30 days unless agreed otherwise with the supplier,
• In most cases a cooling off period of seven working days in which the consumer can withdraw from the contract.

The MP continued: “The regulations also cover ‘cold call’ selling, something that concerns many of my Pendle constituents. Under these regulations suppliers who ‘cold call’ consumers at home must identify clearly the company they represent and the purpose of their call at the beginning of the conversation.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or all 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 195/00 Tuesday 12 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

AUDREY WISE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be attending the funeral of his Parliamentary colleague, Audrey Wise, this Thursday in Preston. The Preston MP had been in ill health for some time.

Speaking from his constituency office earlier today, the Pendle MP said: “I shall remember Audrey as a great fighter for the causes she believed in. She always spoke

out when others might bite their tongue. She championed the rights of the poor and the dispossessed."

"She will be greatly missed at Westminster and in her Preston constituency."

"Her death is a great loss for her family and for us all."

Audrey Wise was MP for Preston from 1987. Previously she was MP for Coventry South West from 1974 to 1979. She was a member of Labour's National Executive from 1982 to 1987.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 196/00 Tuesday 12 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO TELL RAMBLERS: "THE PRIZE OF ACCESS TO LAND IN WITHIN SIGHT"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will tell ramblers this Sunday (17 September) they are on the home straight in the campaign to open up the countryside to walkers. He will say the prize of access to open uncultivated land is now within sight for the millions of people who enjoy walking.

The MP, whose Right to Roam Bill last year pushed the issue to centre stage, will tell a major rally at Warlaw Pike in Northumberland that the Lords have no mandate to change in any material way the Government's Countryside and Rights of Way Bill which has completed all its Commons stages and goes into the House of Lords early next month. Some peers hostile to the measure have threatened to block the Bill by tabling hundreds of amendments.

The Pendle MP will tell the Access Day Rally that the peers have a constitutional right to revise legislation passed by the Commons - but not to wreck it.

The meeting point on Sunday is Blanchland, Northumberland (just on the North Pennines). There will be a short walk to Warlaw Pike for the rally with speeches from the Pendle MP and from the former Cabinet Office Minister, Dr David Clark MP, and

the Chair of the Ramblers Association, Cath McKay. The Rally is one of 18 "Access Day" rallies being held around the country.

The Pendle MP will tell the rally: "The Government is delivering on its pledge to bring in a statutory right of area access to over 4 million acres of some of the most beautiful countryside in England and Wales. It is not for the unelected Lords to try and scupper a

more follows:

"PRIZE OF ACCESS WITHIN SIGHT"

policy which was spelt out in the manifesto on which this Government was elected and which has huge popular support."

"The debate on access has often generated more heat than light. But once the new law is in place people will wonder what all the fuss was about. The Bill offers new rights but also new responsibilities."

"The land is there for us all to enjoy providing we do so sensibly and with consideration. The Bill is packed with safeguards to meet the concerns of those who work the land and depend on it for their livelihood."

Speaking in his Pendle constituency before the rally, the campaigning MP said: "Walkers and ramblers are friends of the countryside. They haven't poisoned the countryside with pesticides. They have not polluted the water courses. They have not silenced the countryside as the birds have perished. They have not grubbed up the hedgerows damaging biodiversity. And they have not sold green fields for development."

The Pendle MP was a member of the Commons Standing Committee which considered, line by line, the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill earlier this year. The Bill goes into the Lords in early October. The Pendle MP withdrew his Right to Roam Bill in March 1999 after the Government promised to bring in its own legislation.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 197/00 Wed 13 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GETTING PETROL TO THE PUMP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, expressed relief earlier today that petrol was beginning to move from the refineries to the filling stations. Speaking from his Nelson office, the MP said: "The main priority now is to get the petrol stations filled up with fuel and to get things back to normal as soon as possible."

"No-one likes paying a fortune to fill up their tank but the main reason for the rise in pump prices since last year is the rise in oil prices from $10 a barrel at the start of the year to about $34 now."

The MP continued: "Like millions of others, I drive a car and I know the difficulties people face - especially those who have to use their car all the time. People living in rural areas with little or no public transport alternatives are having a particularly hard time."

Of the 18p increase per litre over the last 16 months, duty was responsible for less than 2 pence of the rise. The increase in fuel duties this year was the lowest for eleven years.

On Monday, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said: "Of course we understand the concern of motorists and businesses over fuel prices. But first, we cannot and will not alter Government policy on petrol through blockades and pickets. That is not the way to make policy in Britain, and it never will be."

The Government abolished the fuel duty escalator, introduced by the previous Government in 1993. The last two Budgets have cut £400m off car tax - including £55 cut for the drivers of 4 million smaller cars. Under the previous Government, car tax increased

more follows

by £45 between 1993 and 1996.

Had the Government not abolished the fuel duty escalator, duty today would be 6% higher, or 3p more per litre. The Budget also cut duty on cleaner fuels (including ultra low sulphur petrol).

Note to Editors: Other EU countries: It costs £50 to fill up a typical car in the UK; £42 in France or £44 in Holland. But in France, Spain and Italy for instance overall costs for drivers are much higher due to road tolls and other motor taxes.

Note 2 to Editors: Red Diesel: Government aid to farmers and some others in rural areas includes the red diesel subsidy: Red Diesel is marked (with a red dye) to show that reduced excise duty has been paid. Duty on red diesel is 3.31p per litre against 48p per litre for standard diesel. Red diesel is worth about £250m a year to the farming industry.

The rebate applies to "off-road" use of diesel; e.g. British Rail diesel locomotives, central heating systems, vehicles employed in farming, motorway construction etc. Red diesel may also be used by hauliers in their vehicles' refrigeration units (but not to fuel road vehicles).

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 198/00 Thursday 14 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle in August and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,443 - down from 1,455 in July. This represents an unemployment rate of 4.2%. There were 1,071 men and 372 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count is down 18,000 on the July figure. Employment has hit another new record and now stands at 27,960,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "The jobless figures nationally now stand at a 25 year low and there has been a downward trend in Pendle since February this year. However, we still need to work hard to bring new jobs into this area. Last week's decision by Coats Viyella to pull out of UK clothing manufacturing is a real blow to us here in Pendle. We all hope that Albert Hartleys can survive this decision and a buyer emerges."

The MP visited Albert Hartley last month to discuss the problems facing the clothing and textile industry.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 199/00 Tuesday 19 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP HAILS BLUEPRINT FOR NHS DENTISTRY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed a new £100m Government strategy to ensure everyone has access to an NHS dentist. In the House of Commons last year, the campaigning MP described East Lancashire as a "dental desert" and pushed for extra cash.

Speaking from Nelson today, the MP said: "The Government is putting its money where its mouth is. We all know we inherited a situation where NHS dentistry had been allowed to decay."

The MP added: "If patients can wait, they will eventually get treated and the registration rates for children and adults are very close to the national average. At the end of March this year, 60% of East Lancashire children were registered with an NHS dentist compared with 62% nationally. However, it is a disturbing fact that the East Lancashire Health Authority gets around 100 calls a week from people searching for an NHS dentist to treat them."

The MP added: "The Health Authority tells me that only five practices in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale are accepting new NHS patients, two of these have waiting lists and two will accept children only. Most are continuing to provide NHS treatment for existing patients. This is a far from perfect state of affairs."

Note to Editors: There are fifteen dental practices in Pendle. The average number of patients per Pendle dentist is 1,766 - the second highest in East Lancashire after Rossendale with 1,965. Of the telephone calls to the ELHA from members of the public seeking help in finding a dentist, most come from Burnley and Pendle. In the four week period ending on 23 June 2000, 135 calls originated in Pendle (29% of the total from the six East Lancs Boroughs).

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 199/00Wednesday 27 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

YOU'RE NOT ALONE!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed publication of a new TUC leaflet entitled 'You're not alone'. The leaflet explains the new law now in force that give all workers, including casual and agency workers, the right to be accompanied whether by a trade union representative or a colleague at a workplace disciplinary or grievance hearing.

The MP said: "All too often employees are unaware of their rights. The new Employment Relations Act has introduced a whole range of legislation and the TUC are keen to make sure that all workers are aware of them."

He continued: "Even if a workplace does not recognise a union, workers now have the right to bring a union representative into a disciplinary or grievance hearing. It applies in all companies and organisations however large or small, and it does not matter whether or not your employer normally deals with a trade union."

This leaflet explains how these new rights work and how to make use of them and is available by ringing the TUC's hotline on Tel: 0870 600 4882

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 200/00 Wednesday 27 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BREATH OF FRESH AIR FROM BRIGHTON

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, was delighted by the announcement from the Prime Minister outlining improved treatment for cancer patients. In his speech yesterday at the Labour Party Conference, Tony Blair said that the government is to vastly increase spending on cancer research by matching charity donations pound for pound and increasing the scope of the breast screening programme.

Health Secretary Alan Milburn will today announce an additional £20 million a year to be invested in the infrastructure for cancer research by 2003, with an extra £4 million on prostate cancer research.

Speaking from Brighton the Pendle MP said: "This additional money is a shot in the arm for the NHS National Cancer Plan. The scheme is to bring an overall improvement in prevention, research, diagnosis and treatment services."

The MP continued: "Waiting to see a specialist can be a stressful time for patients. The government has said that by the end of this year all patients with suspected cancer, urgently referred by their GP, will be seen by a specialist within two weeks. This is good news."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 201/00 Tuesday 19 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR OFSTED REPORT ON BARLICK SCHOOL EARMARKED FOR CLOSURE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for a fresh OFSTED report on education standards at Rainhall Road Primary School in Barnoldswick. The MP was reacting to news that Lancashire County Council's Education and Cultural Services Committee decided earlier today to take steps to close the school next year.

Speaking from his home in the town, the MP said: "I know that many people battled bravely to save the school and they will be deeply disappointed. However, my top priority is to make sure that Pendle's children get a first rate education. I want the best for them. The structure of education provision must always be secondary to

educational standards. New information from the Local Education Authority shows the school has struggled to deliver the standards required. But I want a second opinion."

The MP added: "The report to the Education Committee makes blunt reading. It says the pupils: *"leave achieving far below national expectations and, on the whole, below what would have been expected given their potential. The school has received a great deal of support and resources."* The report goes on to say: *"the prospects of the school receiving a favourable OFSTED report are not good. In OFSTED terms, the school is failing to give the best value it can to its pupils."*

The MP continued: "Rainhall Road is a small school with only 59 pupils (down from 65 in January) in a building that can accommodate 140. The school's intake in September 1999 was only 5 pupils. The LEA tells me there are enough unfilled places elsewhere in Barlick to accommodate all the children. Six children

more follows

come from Earby - but there are 40 unfilled places over there."

"Yesterday (Monday), I met the Chair of the Education Committee, Hazel Harding, and County Councillor, Tony Martin, to discuss the situation. Closing a school is a big decision and one that is not taken lightly. I pressed hard on the point and I was categorically assured closure was not for financial reasons but for persuasive educational reasons."

The MP met education chiefs at County Hall in Preston in June to discuss the school's future. The school was inspected by OFSTED in February 1997. At the time of the inspection there were 87 pupils on roll. The MP visited the school in March this year and met the Headteacher, Mrs Shirley Cormack, and the chair of governors, Margaret Bell.

Note to Editors: The conclusion to the report to the Education and Cultural Services Committee on 19 September reads:

In absolute terms, pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 2 has been, and remains, very low. There is strong evidence that this is also true when relative performance (compared with similar schools and taking into account pupils' prior attainment) is taken into account. Pupils enter the school with below average standards. They make a good start in Key Stage 1 but they make poor progress in Key Stage 2. They leave achieving far below national expectations and, on the whole, below what would have been expected given their potential. The school has received a great deal of support and resources. The prospects of the school receiving a favourable OFSTED report are not good. In OFSTED terms, the school is failing to give the best value it can to its pupils.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 202/00 Tuesday 19 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SEVEN CANDIDATES FOR COMMONS SPEAKER SIGN UP FOR HUSTINGS

Seven MPs hoping to step into Betty Boothroyd's shoes next month as Speaker of the House of Commons have agreed to participate in a unique hustings organised by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "Unfortunately we have been landed with an electoral system totally unsuited to this number of candidates. The old way of going about things - dragging an unwilling MP to take the chair - has gone forever. We really need the candidates to tell us what kind of Speaker they would be. That's what the hustings will do."

Prentice wrote to all the publicly declared candidates on behalf of more than 100 MPs inviting them to the hustings in Committee Room 10 at the Commons. At the last Business Questions before the House broke for the Summer Recess, Prentice asked the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, if she would organise a hustings but she declined to get involved saying it was not a matter for her.

They candidates who have accepted are: Alan Beith MP, David Clark MP, Sir Patrick Cormack, Gwyneth Dunwoody MP, Michael Lord MP, John McWilliam MP and Nicholas Winterton MP.

The hustings - to be held on Monday 23 October before the House reconvenes at 2.30pm to elect the Speaker - will be chaired by the well respected veteran MP, Bob Sheldon.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 203/00 Wed 20 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP JOINS ITHAAD's PAKISTAN DAY CELEBRATIONS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining a celebration in Vernon Street, Nelson tomorrow evening (Thursday) organised by the local community organisation Ithaad.

Speaking before the event, the MP said: "We all want to see a prosperous and stable Pakistan, set firmly on the road back to democracy."

"The latest bomb outrage in Islamabad - which has so far claimed 16 lives - is absolutely appalling."

"At the moment it is still a complete mystery who is responsible for this carnage. We all want the authorities in Pakistan to track down those responsible and bring them to book."

In his speech tomorrow, the MP will again all for international action to address the issue of Kashmir.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 204/00 Wed 20 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO QUIZ POLICE CHIEF ON CRIME CONCERNS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Lancashire Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, and other senior police officers this Friday at a special briefing to be held at the police HQ at Hutton near Preston.

Speaking before the meeting, the MP said: "Everyone wants to see more police on the beat and I shall be asking detailed questions about how this is to be delivered. Last month, the Government told police forces across England and Wales they could expect an additional 4,000 police officers. Lancashire will get another 100 police

officers - over and above those already announced. Clearly, I want to see Pendle get its fair share."

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: "The Government has provided the cash for more police officers. Now it is up to the police to make sure the new officers are used effectively. We all want to see a crack down on crime."

Last month in Nelson, the MP discussed local crime concerns with members of the Lancashire branch of the Police Federation.

Notes for Editors: The Spending Review, announced by the Chancellor on 18 July 2000, said that overall police spending was planned to rise by 3.8% a year in real terms over the next three years – a total of £9.3 billion for the police in 2003/04.

The extra money announced in the Spending Review will fund the recruitment of an extra 4,000 officers and fund the continued employment of recruits throughout the period of the settlement. This is a major expansion from 5,000 recruits over two years to 9,000 over three years.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 205/00 Thursday 21 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP GOES TO THE SEASIDE IN BID TO PUT AN END TO THE PEERS SHOW

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be packing his bags at the weekend as he leaves for Brighton and the Labour Conference.

One of the key debates this year will be on the House of Lords - a subject on which the MP has firm views. As a member of Labour's National Policy Forum (NPF) - elected by his fellow Labour MPs - the MP was unsuccessful in his bid earlier this year to commit the Party to a wholly elected Upper Chamber.

At the NPF's meeting in Exeter in July the MP secured widespread backing - from the GMB union and others - but failed win the vote against the leadership's recommendation. However, another amendment committing Labour to back an Upper Chamber the majority of whose members are elected is on the agenda.

Speaking in Nelson before leaving for Brighton, the MP said: "I want to see a wholly elected House of Lords, small in number and with powers appropriate to a revising chamber. What is on offer at the moment is risible. We live in a secular state

but it is proposed to appoint more people to Parliament on the basis of their religion! And the recent talk about "people's peers" is a joke. The House of Lords Appointments Commission wants to select people who are "pre-eminent in their chosen field". That sounds as if they will be resurrecting the great and the good again."

"Election is the only basis for a legitimate Parliament. The old House of Lords with its hereditary peers was a complete anachronism in the 20th century - never mind the 21st. What the Government seems hell bent on creating is not much better."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 206/00 Friday 22 September 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CHILD CREDIT BOOST FOR PENDLE FAMILIES

A new wave of press and radio advertising begins next week (25 September) running for three weeks to publicise the new Child Tax Credit which could put hundreds of pounds into the family budget.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on parents in Pendle to make sure they claim their share of an extra £212.5m being made available for 625,000 families in the North West through the new Children's Tax Credit. The credit will be worth up to £442 a year, when it comes into force in April.

Nationally, five million families are set to benefit, giving an extra boost to family incomes of £1.7 billion.

Speaking from Barnoldswick earlier today, the MP said: "This child tax credit will cut the family tax pretty dramatically. It is going to be a great help here in Pendle."

Notes to Editors

The Children's Tax Credit was announced in the Chancellor's 1999 Budget.

What is the Children's Tax Credit?

It's a new tax relief for families, with children, who pay income tax. It could make families up to £442 a year (£8.50p per week) better off by reducing their family's tax bill. There is one Children's Tax Credit per family. It begins in April 2001 and is available to married or unmarried couples and single parents with a child or children under 16. The credit is given as a reduction in the amount of income tax paid.

more follows

CHILD CREDIT BOOST FOR PENDLE FAMILIES

How much is it worth?

Depending on circumstances, the Children's Tax Credit can reduce income tax paid by up to £442 a year (£8.50 a week).

Who can claim it?

Families – either couples (married or unmarried) or lone parents, who have one or more child under 16 living with them for at least part of the tax year.

Which partner in a couple should claim it?

Couples should choose which partner will claim the credit, or decide to share the credit equally between them. If one or both parents is a higher rate taxpayer, then the partner with the higher income must claim it.

How does the credit work?

The credit is targeted at low or middle income families. The credit of £442 is gradually withdrawn at the rate of £1 for every £15 of income taxed at the higher rate.

What happens now?

The Inland Revenue is sending claim forms to families with children who pay tax through PAYE. If parents are self-employed, they can claim Children's Tax Credit in the normal way on their tax return for the year beginning April 201.

How do parents get the money?

If you pay tax through PAYE, then the Inland Revenue will adjust your tax code after the claim form has been returned to them. This will mean parents will get up to £442 over the course of 2001/2, having less tax deducted by their employer each week or month. If parents are self-employed, the tax relief should be claimed when tax returns are completed for the year beginning 6 April 2001.

Further information

For help in completing the claim form, or parents have further questions, they should contact the Children's Tax Credit Helpline on **0845 300 10 36**. If parents want a leaflet on Children's tax Credit then they should telephone the Inland Revenue Orderline on **0845 9000 444**. If parents pay tax through PAYE and have not received a claim form by the end of July, they should contact their local tax office.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 207/00 Tuesday 3 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the launch of a new scheme to help improve the dental health of children in East Lancashire. The scheme, backed by a detailed resource pack, is being sent to every Primary School in Burnley, Penile and Rossendale.

The MP, who has long campaigned for improved dental care in Pendle, said: "The launch of this programme is great news. The pack covers all aspects of oral health care with worksheets on dental anatomy, tooth decay, gum disease and visiting the dentist."

The MP added: "Things seem to be moving at last. This scheme follows the recent announcement of a new £100m Government strategy to ensure that everyone has access to an NHS dentist. The Department of Health has also been working on a comprehensive strategy for dentistry and the White Paper should create a framework to make sure that anyone who wants NHS dentistry can get it."

The MP concluded: "If children can be persuaded at an early age to take care of their teeth the benefits (and their teeth) should last them a life time!"

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 208/00 Tuesday 3 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP DROPS IN
Photocall: St John Southworth Church Hall, Nelson 4.30pm Friday 6 October

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting the Drop-in Centre on St John Southworth Church Hall, Every Street, Nelson this Friday 6 October to chat to members of the Pendle Asylum Seekers' Support Group. The centre is not only used by members of the local community, it is also a place where asylum seekers can go for a cup of tea, a chat, support and advice.

The MP said: "The local community deserves credit for providing somewhere for people to drop-in. Volunteers are not only there to talk to but they also give advice and support for people in need."

Speaking before the visit the MP added: "The Government is working hard to clear the backlog of asylum applications. We are aiming to process these within 2 months. Huge delays are simply unacceptable."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 209/00 Tuesday 3 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP JOINS MENINGITIS WALK
Photocall: West Street CP School, Colne

9.00am Saturday 7 October

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining a national sponsored walk in aid of the Spencer Dayman Meningitis Laboratories this Saturday. The Pendle leg of the walk starts at West Street CP School, Colne at 9.00am on Saturday 7 October and passes through Nelson, Brierfield and Reedley, on to Burnley and ending the day at Rochdale.

The MP was invited to join the walk by Steve Dayman, who lost the 14-month son, Spencer, to Meningococcal Meningitis Group B and Septicaemia 17 years ago. For the past eight years Mr Dayman has undertaken marathon walks and this year he is trekking all the way from Morpeth to Bristol.

The MP said: "This is an amazing undertaking and I am proud to be a small part of it. The walk is not only to raise funds, it will also raise the profile for a disease that is still largely a mystery to us. There is still no vaccine for 60% of Meningococcal Meningitis. The Spencer Dayman Laboratories are working towards the prevention of this devastating disease."

The MP added: "We all hope for a breakthrough soon."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 210/00 Tuesday 3 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

<u>Photocall:</u> Edge End High School, Nelson.
1.30pm Friday 6 October

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting Edge End High School, Nelson to chat with its head, Martin Burgess, this Friday. The MP will be talking about a number of issues with the Head including sports provisions, school buildings and health and safety matters.

Speaking before the visit the MP said: "Edge End is a great school but the buildings are showing a few signs of wear and tear. The Government is determined to see all schools brought up to scratch."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 211/00 Wednesday 4 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

HIGH TECH AT WALTON HIGH
<u>Photocall:</u> Walton High School, Oxford Road, Nelson, Thursday 5 October 2.15pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining students and teachers at the official opening of their new Information Communication Technology facilities at Walton High School tomorrow (Thursday). The school has, over the last few months, undertaken a major upgrade of its ICT facilities and now has about 130 computers, all with Internet access.

The MP said: "The world of work - and leisure - is changing faster than ever before. Information technology is revolutionising our lives and we've got to get up to speed. These new facilities at Walton High School represent another step forward. Students can familiarise themselves with the latest technology. It's great stuff."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 212/00 Monday 2 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

TORIES TRY TO RECRUIT LABOUR MP

Pendle Labour MP, Gordon Prentice, has been invited to join the Conservative Party by its Leader, William Hague.

A letter, addressed to Mr Prentice at his constituency office in Nelson, told the astonished MP that William Hague needed his help to tackle Tony Blair and the Labour Government.

The MP was asked to donate up to £500 which, the letter claimed, would enable him to become "an important member of the Conservative Party" helping it "speak up for the common sense instincts of the British people".

Speaking from his constituency office earlier today, the bemused MP said: "William Hague also invited me to fill in a questionnaire - the answers to which, he says, will have "a lasting impact" on his policies!"

The MP added: "William Hague talks about his common sense revolution. But it's hardly common sense to write to a Labour MP asking for a cash donation and ideas for the Conservative manifesto!"

"Most people would regard it as lunacy!"

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 213/00 Tuesday 3 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WANTS BOOST TO HILL FARMERS' INCOMES

Pendle's hill farmers are facing big changes in the wake of Government moves to redraw farm support policies in the upland (or less favoured) areas of England.

In a letter to local MP, Gordon Prentice, Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, outlined plans for a new Hill Farm Allowance designed to reduce incentives for overproduction, and to encourage environmentally beneficial management of hill areas.

The Minister told the MP that hill farming incomes have been plummeting with the average net income of a full time hill farmer falling below £6,000 last year, despite an

average subsidy of more than £28,000 per farm. “These figures are shocking” says the MP.

Speaking from Barnoldswick today, the MP said: “Farmers are having a rough time and many of them are eking out a bare existence despite very large sums of public money going into agriculture through subsidies. Clearly, the old ways are not working and we need to take a fresh look at things.”

The Pendle MP is to meet the local branch of the National Farmers Union to discuss prospects for the industry.

Note to Editors: The Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: “The Government's proposals to replace Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances by Hill Farming Allowances... are currently with the European Commission for final appraisal and I hope approval.

The background lies in the Agenda 2000 Common Agricultural Policy reform package which both required and enabled us to take a fresh look at farming support policies in the less favoured areas. The previous arrangements had a number of weaknesses. As production-based payments, they encouraged over-production and failed to deliver our policy objectives

more follows

for hill areas. They attracted criticism both from those who were concerned that increased stocking levels risked damaging the environment, and from those who believe that market prices, rather than public subsidies, should determine levels of agricultural production. As the government holds both these views, we found it increasingly hard to justify the arrangements, particularly as they were not proving to be an effective way of maintaining hill farm incomes. (These) have been declining and the average net income of a full time hill farmer fell below £6,000 last year, despite an average subsidy of more than £28,000 per farm.

The new Hill Farm Allowance (HFA) scheme is designed to reduce incentives for overproduction, and to encourage environmentally beneficial management of hill areas... The key change is from payments based on the number of livestock farmed to payments based on the area of land farmed. Our highly valued upland landscapes have been formed by the activities of farmers over many generations. Today many areas are at risk: the quality of moorland vegetation is deteriorating, the average sward length is decreasing, and poaching is becoming more widespread. Part of the reason for this is production-based support systems which encourage farmers to build up their herds and flocks to and sometimes beyond the limit their land will sustain. Overproduction also depresses market prices, often leading to reduced farm incomes. The move to area-based LFA payments... will dramatically reduce incentives for overstocking...

I understand that the farming industry has reservations about the new scheme. The change from headage to area-based payments means there will be losers as well as winners, at a time of low hill farm incomes.

I have also taken action to smooth the transition as far as possible. The Government has secured extra money to increase the basic English LFA support budget of £27 million by £13 million in 2001, and by a further £30 million over the following three years while the other rural development measures come on stream. Some of this money will be used to increase area payment rates for all farmers. the remainder going to finance a safety net to cushion the impact on the losers. Provided their forage area remains unchanged, no farmers will receive in 2001 less than 90% of the sum they were paid in 2000; for 2002 this threshold drops to 80%.

This must be seen in addition to the extra £60 million the Government has paid each year in support for UK hill farmers in 1998, 1999 and 2000, in recognition of the low level of farm incomes in the hills.

However, these changes will not guarantee the future of upland farming. Farmers need to continue to make the most of both the agricultural and non-agricultural potential of their land... Many hill farmers are well placed to benefit from agri-environment schemes such as countryside stewardship, and from assistance to improve marketing product development and diversification. To do so, they may need to learn new skills, which is why I have set money aside this year for business advice and training specifically for hill farmers in England. I will also be establishing a network of demonstration farms, where we can help the farming community to develop their business and equip them for the future.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 214/00 Monday 9 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOVERNMENT SETS NEW TARGETS TO HELP LONE PARENTS GET INTO WORK

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, today set new targets to get the number of lone parents in work in the UK up to the levels of other countries.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves to make it easier for lone parents to re-enter work while stressing that bringing up young children is itself a full time job. Speaking from his constituency office today, the MP said there was no requirement to take up work or undertake training, though lone parents whose children are over 5 would be required to come in for a discussion about the possibilities. Those with younger children could volunteer for the programme if they wish.

The MP said: “Mums who stay at home to bring up their children are doing a hugely important job and we all recognise that. But mothers with older children may want to get back into work and the Government aims to make it easier for them to do this.”

The new figures show an increase in the proportion of lone parents in work from 44% in 1997 to almost 50% today, but the UK still lags behind other countries in the 'league table' of international comparisons of the numbers of lone parents in work:

Country	Lone mothers in work	Married mother in work
France	82 per cent	58 per cent
Germany	67 per cent	57 per cent
Sweden	70 per cent	80 per cent
USA	60 per cent	64 per cent

more follows

HELPING LONE PARENTS

The Chancellor stressed that the biggest changes are yet to come, with an expansion of child care places to match the already announced expansion. New and improved arrangements for the Working Families Tax Credit; the under-16s child credit in WFTC increased from £21.25 to £25.60 in June this year. With this change the maximum WFTC available for a lone parent with two children increased by £450 a year. A new £4.2m advertising campaign is to be launched this month.

The Chancellor said: "Our new package of help with child care, extra support through the Working Families Tax Credit and initiatives like Sure Start will help more lone parents combine a job with the vital work of bringing up children and get the number of lone parents in work up to US levels.

"This Government is on the side of working mothers and working families, helping them to combine paid work with the vital job of bringing up children. We are working to give them a real choice, helping them with record increases in child benefit, the Working Families Tax Credit and the new Children's Tax Credit, a £1.5 billion tax cut for up to 5 million families. We're tackling child poverty, giving families and mothers genuine choice by making work - the best route out of poverty - pay.

"We have looked at alternative proposals for a transferable tax allowance. Under such a scheme, a family with two children on £15,000 a year would receive £965 a year. With the Working Families Tax Credit, the same couple would receive not £965 but £2,200 a year.

"Scrapping the WFTC and the New Deal for Lone Parents would deny lone parents the choice of whether to work and would leave millions of children and their parents in poverty. Over a million low and middle income families would lose more than £24 a week if the WFTC were scrapped."

Note to Editors: Since 1997, 100,000 lone parents have moved into work and 228,000 childcare places have already been established. Ministers say new places will cater for 1.6 million children by 2004. There are 100,000 (25%) more lone parents claiming Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) than claimed Family Credit, the benefit it replaced. And 90,000 lone parents receive the childcare element of WFTC, compared with 47,000 who claimed the childcare element of Family Credit.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

For Immediate Release. No 215/00 Monday 9 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ELECTING THE SPEAKER

The first item of business when the Commons returns at 2.30pm on 23 October will be the election of the new Speaker to succeed the hugely effective and highly regarded Betty Boothroyd.

But on that Monday morning there will be another related - and quite unique - Parliamentary event, the brain child of Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP writes:

"The Speakership brings instant national celebrity, an official residence at Westminster and all the trappings of high office. I want to know from the candidates for Speaker why they want the job. That's the purpose of the "hustings". It will be some event.

So far, eight candidates have accepted my invitation: the Lib Dem, Alan Beith, Conservatives John Butterfill, Patrick Cormack, Michael Lord and Nicholas Winterton, and Labour MPs David Clark, Gwyneth Dunwoody and John McWilliam. Others have indicated their intention to stand but are choosing not to participate in the hustings or are saying nothing.

Whether they choose to join in or not, I have asked all the candidates to tell MPs in writing what unique qualities they would bring to the job. In all this we are breaking new ground.

The Commons has rules and standing orders aplenty and, where these are silent, the conventions and precedents kick in. However, nothing has prepared MPs for the election of the new Speaker where there are enough candidates to field a football team.

The old way of doing things where a handful of candidates "emerge", the House votes and the winner is reluctantly hauled to the Chair has gone forever.
more follows

Astonishingly, although we have had contested elections in the past, there is no record in the history of Parliament of there having been more than two candidates proposed.

This time, we need to hear from the candidates themselves, spelling out the qualities they uniquely would bring to the job. There are worries that this innovation will lead to a mad scramble for votes with promises being made in the heat of battle which may compromise the independence of the Chair later. These fears are, I believe, misplaced. All the candidates, without exception, are more than able to hold the ring, and act fairly and impartially.

But there is more to being Speaker than that. There is the modernisation agenda, the relationship between Parliament and the Executive, and much else besides where the Speaker will have a crucially important role and huge influence.

The Speaker carries such weight because he or she relies on the authority which comes from election. But, this time, the system of election is simply unable to cope with the numbers. It is perfectly possible for someone to win who may be seen as second or, even, third best.

I was told by many wise heads over the summer that the "field would thin out". Precisely the opposite has happened. In fact there is no incentive whatsoever for any candidate to pull out. The method of election guarantees that no-one will receive a humiliatingly low vote.

The arcane procedures place a heavy responsibility on the Father of the House, Ted Heath who takes the chair for the election of the Speaker and decides on the batting order.

The first candidate is proposed and the second is moved as an amendment. Whoever succeeds at that point then has to win a second vote that he or she take the chair as Speaker. If that is lost then it is back to square one and further names can be proposed and voted on until there are no more candidates left.

Whoever finally emerges as the new Speaker, there is a powerful case for change. We can't do it this way again.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 217/00 Wednesday 11 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUND

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement yesterday of a major new Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to help improve housing, raise school standards, reduce crime and improve health in deprived areas. The Government has published a consultation paper which sets out proposals on how the Fund will operate and the conditions on which funding will depend.

The MP said: “If Pendle fulfils the conditions it will receive £3.9 million over 3 years. The money will be targeted at the most deprived areas of the constituency and aims to reverse their decline and prevent it from recurring.”

Announcing the fund, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, said: “The Fund will provide extra, non-ring fenced money to help local authorities in the most deprived areas spend more on teachers, police officers, crime prevention programmes, social services or any other services which deliver real improvements for the community.”

The announcement comes just before the visit to Pendle of Housing Minister, Nick Raynsford, next Tuesday 17 October. The Minister is making a whistle stop tour of the area accompanied by the local MP, the Chief Executive of Pendle Borough Council and Labour Group Leader, Azhar Ali.

The Pendle MP said: “East Lancashire has some of the most run-down housing in the country and it is important the Minster sees it with his own eyes. The new Neighbourhood Renewal Fund money comes on top of the latest successful SRB bid. We should start to see a difference soon.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 218/00 Tuesday 17 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

JACK STRAW MP IN PENDLE
Photocall: Barrowford Civic Hall, Nora Street, Barrowford, Friday 20 October at 8.00pm

Home Secretary, Jack Straw, will be delivering the annual Sidney Silverman lecture this Friday (20 October) at Barrowford Civic Hall beginning at 8.00pm. Joining him on the platform will be local MP, Gordon Prentice, and CLP chair, Mr Tony Leo and Mr Paul Tinnion from the North West Co-op Party. The meeting is open to the public and press.

The lecture - one of the highlights of the Pendle Labour Party's calendar - has been delivered by some prestigious names in the past. Among those are Unison General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Alf Morris MP, the veteran campaigner on disability rights, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook MP and International Development Minister Clare Short MP.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "We have always had an arresting figure for the Silverman Lecture and Jack Straw is no exception! Jack is no stranger to controversy and I am sure he will be stimulating and provocative. Only last week we both featured on the front page of a local newspaper on the drugs issue. I am looking forward enormously to Friday's lecture, it will undoubtedly be an interesting evening."

Note to Editors: Sydney Silverman was born 101 years ago on 8 October 1895 and represented Nelson and Colne (now part of the Pendle constituency) in Parliament for 33 years. He was best known for his campaign for the abolition of the death penalty.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 219/00 Tuesday 17 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MINISTER HINTS AT NEW POWERS TO CURB ROGUE LANDLORDS

Housing Minister, Nick Raynsford, gave a clear hint today that the Government is likely to introduce legislation giving councils such as Pendle new powers to clamp down on rogue landlords.

The Minister was speaking during a tour of Pendle and Burnley which took him through the Nelson West Renewal Area and on to the Southfield Renewal Area before a meeting with business leaders, health workers and the police at the Waterbridge Resource Centre in Colne. The Minister moved on to Burnley to view housing problems there before speaking to a gathering at the Burnley Business Centre.

The Minister indicated that the Government would allow some Councils, where there was a demonstrable problem, powers to licence private landlords to let properties in designated areas.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, welcomed the move. Speaking in Nelson, the MP said: “I have been raising the issue of rogue landlords for ages and it’s great news that the Government is going to act. No-one wants to drive out the good landlord; it’s the

problem of the bad landlord who doesn't give a fig about the tenant or the state of the property that we've got to address."

The Pendle MP continued: "Councils such as my own should have powers to regulate private landlords. That means inspecting properties to make sure they are up to standard. Some landlords don't give a hoot what happens to their run down properties. They buy up houses cheaply and their whole aim is to maximise the return they get and forget the consequences for the area of tenants who make the lives of their neighbours an absolute

more follows

misery. We are going to do something about that."

The Minister's visit to Pendle follows the announcement on 10 October that the Borough is to receive £3.9 million from the Government from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The cash goes to areas suffering disadvantage to narrow the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country.

The Pendle MP added: "Nick Raynsford knows housing policy inside out. But it was still important to get him here to Pendle and Burnley to see for himself the run down nature of much of our housing stock. In this case, seeing is believing. The Minister also indicated that steps are to be taken to force landlords to return deposits they refuse to return to tenants."

Last year the Pendle MP won a commitment from the Government to clamp down on rogue landlords who refuse to return deposits to tenants at the end of their tenancy.

The MP said: "The vast majority of landlords return the bond as soon as they have checked the property has been left in good order but there are instances here in Pendle where landlords hang on to the cash. I know of cases where up to £800 was withheld for no good reason."

The MP voiced his concerns with local landlords at a meeting in Nelson in June last year. At the time, the MP gave his full support to a campaign for the introduction of a National Licensing Scheme for Private Sector Landlords.

Note to editor: For landlords to obtain a licence, the property would need to satisfy a number of requirements. It would have to be adequately maintained with necessary safety certificates. The manager or owner would need to be a fit and proper person with no relevant convictions, a good management record and an approved tenancy agreement, an adequate letting policy (which include the vetting of new tenants) and a rent deposit scheme.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 220/00 Wednesday 18 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FALL IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle in September and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,293 - down from 1,443 in August. This represents an unemployment rate of 3.7%. There were 949 men and 344 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count is down 16,400 on the August figure and now stands at 1,035,300. Employment now stands at nearly 27,960,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "If the current trend continues the unemployment figure should drop below the one-million mark before Christmas. The Government's New Deal is helping to ensure that more people are joining the labour market and getting access to jobs. In Pendle 739 young people have benefited so far from the programme."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 221/00 Tuesday 24 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FSA GETS TOUGH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) that they will be investigating any mis-selling of mortgage endowment policies, that may be still going on, with a view to possible enforcement action.

In a statement issued by the FSA they say that they will be issuing detailed guidance to firms on how to deal quickly and efficiently with mortgage complaints so that they handle complaints properly and provide a consistent and fair service for consumers. They have also issued a fact sheet for home owners who have an endowment policy and are thinking about making a complaint.

The MP said: “People with endowment mortgages are worried that low inflation and falling investment returns may mean their policies might not grow fast enough in the future to pay off the mortgage loan in full.”

He continued “There are some cases where policy holders have already been told that their policy is likely to show a shortfall and quite understandably the holders may feel that they weren’t given good advice when they took out their endowment policy.”

The fact sheet is a guide for those who think they may have been given bad advice when they took their mortgage out and it also explains how to make a complaint and on what basis compensation is decided. The leaflet is available from the FSA Leafletline on Tel: 0800 917 3311

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 223/00 Wednesday 25 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FIREWORK SAFETY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for a ban on killer fireworks. The MP has written to Ministers following complaints from a number of constituents about fireworks and in the light of the tragic recent death of a teenager in nearby Burnley. The DTI has this year drawn up a paper on fireworks to address the issues which are most commonly raised. However the MP is concerned there still seem to be dangerous fireworks slipping through the regulation net.

The MP said: “Millions of fireworks are sold and used safely each year. However, many people continue to raise concerns about their use.”

He continued: “At my last surgery, a Nelson resident brought in the case of a spent firework. It appeared to be made out of rigid plastic and if this had splintered could have caused dreadful injuries to anyone close by.”

He added: “I have written to the Minister about this type of firework and would like to see it banned.”

The Government is working closely with the police, fire brigades, and local authorities to promote firework safety messages. Information packs contain material on organising private and public displays, safety legislation and other information on the careful use of fireworks.

The MP concluded: “Our main objective must be to reduce the number of firework injuries. This has to be done through educating young people and tightening up on existing regulations. Bonfire night should be a night to remember not one to forget.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 224/00 Tuesday 24 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP RENEWS CALL FOR BOOST IN DOCTOR NUMBERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged Ministers to offer fresh incentives to doctors to practice in East Lancashire to replace the GPs in the area who are set to retire over the next few years.

In the Commons today, the MP quizzed Health Minister, John Hutton, about the number of GPs who will shortly be retiring. In the East Lancashire Health Authority area, 15 GPs out of 276 (or 5.4% of the total) are due to retire by 2005. This is the highest percentage in England outside Greater London. The Minister said he would be happy to meet the Pendle MP to discuss the Government’s response.

The Pendle MP commented: “There are three applications from the East Lancs Heath Authority area on the Minister’s desk at the moment waiting decision. They are for Personal Medical Services (PMS) pilots - giving GP’s new flexibility - and I am hoping for a positive outcome. The Government recognises there is a problem and - with the Health Authority - we are addressing it.”

Note to Editors: The East Lancashire Health Authority is taking a number of initiatives which include: • Promoting Personal Medical Services (PMS) pilots. A submission for Colne is with the Minister at present; • Working locally through Primary Care Groups (PCGS) and with the Post Graduate Medical Centre at Manchester University to expand the number of training practices and the number of trainees in East Lancs. Three locally trained general practitioners joined the East Lancashire list last year; • The development of a recruitment package aimed at the NHS in East Lancashire, but with a focus on General Practice; • Ensuring that retiring GPs give as much notice as possible (three months minimum) and to plan a phased approach to retirement where possible; • PCGs are encouraging practices to review their skill mix and examine alternative options for patient care e.g. greater use of nurse practitioners.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 225/00 Wednesday 25 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE TO PRESS FOR EARLY VOTE ON CHANGES TO COMMONS PROCEDURES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to press the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, to make Government time available to debate and vote on the recommendations of the ground breaking report of the Liaison Committee which, if carried through, would have a huge impact on the balance of power between Parliament and the Government. He has tabled a Commons motion calling for action.

The MP plans to quiz the Leader of the House at Business Questions this Thursday at 12.30pm. He will remind her of the commitment she made on 13 July to have a debate on the report and also the pledge made on the same day by the Prime Minister that there would be a free vote.

Speaking today from Westminster, the MP said: "The Chair of the PLP, Clive Soley, told the PLP today there will be a debate before the Queen's Speech on modernisation issues such as the hours of sitting. That's good so far as it goes but what about the hugely significant report of the Liaison Committee which represents the unanimous view of all the Chairs of the Select Committees? We don't want that to be pigeon-holed. All the talk of "modernisation" is just hot air unless we get to grips with this central issue of Parliament's relationship with the Executive."

"Modernisation is more than abandoning tights and full bottomed wigs."

Note to Editors: EDM 1079 on the Implementation of the Liaison Committee Report. tabled by the Pendle MP, appears in the Order Paper today. It reads:

This House recalls that EDM 476 warmly welcomed the first report of the Liaison Committee, Session 1999-2000, (HC300) published on 2 March, which

more follows

PRENTICE TO PRESS FOR EARLY VOTE ON CHANGES TO COMMONS PROCEDURES

observed that the membership of select committees is effectively under the control of the whips and that members have been kept off select committees because of their views and that this is wrong in principle; recognises that the EDM has been supported by 244 hon members and that the Leader of the House confirmed on the 13th July that there would be a separate debate on the Liaison Committee's report; further notes that on the same day the Prime Minister told the Leader of the Opposition that there would be a free vote on the Report's recommendations, as there would be on the Conservative side; and in the light of the statements made on 23rd October by candidates seeking election to the Speakership and by other hon members expressing concerns at the way in which Parliament had allowed itself to be side-lined; calls upon the Leader of the House to make Government time available to debate and vote on the Liaison Committee Report.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 228/00 Tuesday 31 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FREE TV LICENCES FOR THE OVER 75s

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is delighted that from tomorrow (Wednesday 1 November) the over-75s will qualify for a free TV licence. New licences are currently in the process of being sent out to qualifying households.

The MP said: "In Pendle there are 6,504 pensioners who can benefit from this scheme. I know that many pensioners rely on their TV for news and entertainment and now they no longer have to fork out the £104 for the licence."

Those eligible have already been written to and given the opportunity to apply - whether by buying a short-term licence or simply registering their eligibility for a free one. Most free licences will be sent by post during November and anyone who had a licence which expired after 31st October will receive a refund with their licence. If, by the end of November, the licence hasn't been delivered there is a special Over 75 Helpline people can call - 0845 603 6999 or 0845 602 3334

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 229/00 Tuesday 31 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

A COSY GLOW FOR PENSIONERS

Winter Fuel Payments this year will start to go out from next week says local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP said: "Pendle winters can be tough. We've already had experience of that just this week. This is not the time for the elderly to start economising by turning their heating down."

Payments will be made by Girocheque or Payable Order sent to home addresses or by Automated Credit Transfer direct into a bank or building society. If anyone does not receive their payment for winter 2000 by mid-December there is a Winter Fuel Payment helpline on Tel 08459 15 15 15.

The MP concluded: "All 16,259 pensioners in Pendle will benefit from the winter fuel payment increase from £100 to £150. This payment should be bringing a glow to their cheeks in more ways than one."

However, the MP warned: "This good news for pensioners should not stop there. Pensioners must continue to be one of our top priorities and I will be pressing hard for a big increase in the basic State Pension next April."

Note to editor: The Government intends to make all the payments over a 5 week period beginning 6 November, including those who are newly eligible this year (the majority are men aged over 60 to 65). The changes to the scheme mean that up to 11.5 million people in over 8 million households will now be eligible for a payment this winter. The majority will get their payments automatically (over 10 million people) by virtue of their existing entitlement to a social security benefit.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 235/00 Thursday 2 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOOD NEWS ON INFANT CLASS SIZES

Infant classes have shrunk dramatically over the past 2 years says local MP, Gordon Prentice. In a letter to the MP yesterday, Education Secretary, David Blunkett, confirmed that the number of pupils in infant classes of 31 or more has reduced from 17,319 in January 1998 to 3,850 in September 1999 and down to just 58 in September 2000.

The local MP said: “These are splendid results and good news for schools, teachers, parents and most importantly, the children themselves.”

In his letter to the MP, David Blunkett, said: “As you will recall, in January 1998 there were 485,000 children in large infant classes of over 30 - some 29 per cent of the age group. Our target for this September was to reduce to 50,000 the number of five, six and seven year olds in infant classes of 31 or more pupils. We are well within the target - the number for September is in fact just 30,000. This means we are on course for early delivery of our pledge in 2001.”

The letter went on: “Although our pledge covered infant classes only, the January 2000 figures showed that class sizes for 8-11 year olds are also starting to fall for the first time in a decade - as are those for primary classes overall. It is important that we maintain the benefits of smaller class sizes when children move from infant to junior classes. As a result of the year 2000 spending review, therefore, £73 million will be made available in 2001-02 to enable 8-11 year olds who have already benefited from the infant class size pledge to continue to benefit from smaller classes in the future.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 230/00 Tuesday 31 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS POLICE CHIEF ON FREEMASONS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a move by Lancashire Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, to force police officers to disclose whether they are freemasons. The Police chief has called upon the Government to bring in a mandatory scheme after Lancashire officers failed to respond to a voluntary survey.

The MP is in touch with Home Secretary, Jack Straw, urging him to introduce such a scheme.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "Secret societies have no place in the administration of justice. If people want to be freemasons that is up to them. But they should tell the rest of us.

In January last year, the MP called for a statutory register of interests for judges to ensure the trials they preside over are not tainted with suggestions of bias on the bench. At the time, he told Parliament that 64 members of the judiciary had chosen not to disclose whether or not they were freemasons. The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice recently specifically asked judges to disclose this information voluntarily.

The then Minister, Geoff Hoon, told Prentice the Government had no plans to bring in a statutory register.

The MP said: "Councillors have to register their interests. MPs must do so and the police and judges too should be open and honest about their interests. I am pressing the Government to have another look at this issue."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 231/00 Tuesday 31 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS CO-OP ON GENETIC TEST INSURANCE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement by the Co-operative Insurance Society that it will not require customers to disclose details of any genetic test result before deciding whether to give insurance cover.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is a welcome move and all credit to the CIS for doing this. But I want to see the law changed to closely regulate the use of genetic information by insurance companies and the financial services sector. Clearly, the insurance companies will ask questions, as they have always done, to assess risk. But mandatory genetic testing is a step too far."

"If they are allowed to use genetic information allowing them to accurately separate out people with a pre-disposition to a certain disease, then some people are going to become uninsurable."

The MP added: "I am very concerned we don't unwittingly step onto a very slippery slope. I am in touch with Ministers to find out precisely where all this genetic testing is taking us."

Note to Editors: The CIS says: "The move follows the recent announcement from the genetics and insurance committee, which stated that insurers would, in future, be permitted to use of tests for Huntingdon's Disease when assessing prospective customers.

The committee are also considering a number of other genetic tests the results of which it may allow to be used for insurance purposes. CIS believes that the developments in genetic testing need to be seen from an overall consumer perspective and not just a clinical one. CIS has a co-operative commitment to its customers and to social values.

There may well come a time in the future when genetic information will be seen as an acceptable basis for insurance underwriting. But when such a large majority of the population remain under-insured, a measure

more follows

apparently drawn from the pages of a science fiction novel, will represent a further deterrent to securing adequate protection.

CIS are keen to stress that they are not against improvements in medical science, particularly in the case of generically inherited diseases, but feels that these advances in respect of its own underwriting practices need to be handled with sensitivity and social awareness.

This is not the same as rating someone higher because they have taken the conscious decision to smoke cigarettes. We are talking about the potential of refusing someone life cover because they have an inherited gene from one of their parents. The social implications could be significant for certain groups of people within the community.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 233/00 Tuesday 31 October 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP URGES ACTION TO PROTECT SOLDIERS FROM TROPICAL DISEASES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing the Government to ensure that British soldiers sent overseas are inoculated against tropical diseases. The MP was concerned to learn that soldiers sent to Sierra Leone earlier this year were at risk.

The MP quizzed Defence Minister, John Speller, on the steps he is taking to ensure that rapid reaction forces are adequately protected against the common tropical diseases before they leave the UK.

The Minister told the MP: “It is the Ministry of Defence's policy that all Service personnel should be up to date with routine vaccinations and that members of the Joint Rapid Reaction forces should be up to date with certain additional vaccinations, depending on their degree of readiness. Personnel deploying to high risk areas should receive further vaccinations specific to the risks they face.”

The Minister continued: “Other aspects of medical preparedness will depend on the role of the deploying forces and the geographical location to which they are deploying. The role of Commanding Officers in maintaining medical and other aspects of preparedness of their personnel for military operations bas recently been emphasised through the chain of command.”

The Pendle MP added: “We ask a great deal of our armed services. They have a difficult enough job to do without having to worry about contracting some dreadful tropical disease.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 234/00 Wednesday 1 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FAR EAST PoWs DESERVE COMPENSATION says MP

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, gave a strong hint today at Question time in the Commons, that former Far East Prisoners of War would get some kind of compensation for their ordeal. Hitherto, the Government has refused to budge from its long standing policy not to make ex gratia payments to ex PoWs.

In February this year, Defence Minister, Dr Lewis Moonie, told the Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, there were no plans to alter the long-standing policy not to adopt financial compensation arrangements. The MP had lobbied hard on the issue following representations from his local branch of the Royal British Legion.

The Pendle MP said: "I am keeping my fingers crossed there will be an announcement next week in the Pre Budget Statement. I certainly want the Government to make its position crystal clear before Remembrance Day on Sunday 12th."

The MP wrote to the Prime Minister in December 1999 following a meeting with the British Legion's Lancashire Field Officer, Bob Ellis, at Westminster. Up to now the PoWs have only received a maximum of £76 in compensation.

Speaking from Westminster today, the MP said: "The former Far East PoWs deserve compensation. It is the least we can do."

Note to Editors: Defence Minister, Dr Lewis Moonie MP told the Pendle MP in February that estimates in the region of 10,639 surviving ex PoWs had been made by The Royal British Legion. The FE PoWs have only ever received a maximum of £76 in compensation. The British Government of 1955 deliberately avoided pressing for further compensation under the terms of the 1951 Peace Treaty when it was open to do so.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 235/00 Wednesday 1 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ROAD TAX CHEATS GET THEIR CARS CRUSHED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed the success of the clamp down against drivers who dodge paying road tax. Since the wheel clamping scheme was introduced in August 1997 there has been a huge increase in the number of cars impounded and crushed.

The MP quizzed Transport Minister, Keith Hill, who told him that in 1997, 557 vehicles were impounded because their owners failed to buy a road fund licence. By 2000 this number had soared to 11,962. The number of vehicles crushed over the same period rose dramatically from 163 to 10,205.

The Pendle MP courted controversy in October 1997 when he said untaxed vehicles should be "clamped and crushed". Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "It costs a lot to run a car and road tax dodgers mean the rest of us pay more. The penalties for avoiding road tax should be swift and severe. I am encouraged by these new figures."

Note to Editors: Not having a current tax disc is illegal and could be expensive. Offenders face a fine of up to £1,000 for a private car or motorcycle and up to £26,000 for a heavy goods vehicle. In addition to paying a fine, convicted offenders will have to pay backduty penalties from the date the vehicle was last licensed, together with costs.

YEAR	IMPOUNDED	/CRUSHED
1997	557	163
1998	4,938	3,663
1999	10,718	8,369
2000 (to date)	11,962	10,205

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 246/00 Tuesday 14 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP HAILS BIG CASH INJECTION INTO LOCAL NHS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the big cash injection into the East Lancashire Heath Authority which covers his Pendle constituency.

In the Commons this afternoon, Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, announced that the East Lancs Health Authority would receive a total allocation of £415,174,000 - a real terms increase of £22,831,000 or 5.97%.

Every Health Authority will benefit from a further increase of at least 6% in 2002/3 and a further increase of at least 6% in 2003/4. Milburn told the Commons these increases are the minimum which all health authorities can expect to receive.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This extra cash is a real shot in the arm for our local NHS. This is real money - not funny money - and it is up to our local NHS to make sure it is spent wisely. It is great news."

The Health Secretary told the Commons: "These allocations to health authorities will fund a further £450 million to help tackle our country's biggest killers - cancer and coronary heart disease. Our rates of both diseases are too high. Both diseases are largely preventable."

"The extra resources will mean more drugs to combat cancer and heart disease, more help for people to give up smoking - a major cause of cancer and heart disease - and more operations provided more quickly for more people with cancer and heart disease. By December next year for example there will be a new maximum one month wait from an urgent GP referral to treatment for men

more follows

MP HAILS BIG CASH INJECTION INTO LOCAL NHS

with testicular cancer, for children with cancer and for patients of all ages with acute leukaemia. Similarly, by March 2002 three in four eligible patients will receive life-saving clot busting drugs thrombolysis - within 30 minutes. At present many people wait twice as long."

"Waiting is the public's number one concern about the health service. That's why the Government has placed such a strong emphasis on winning the war on waiting in the NHS. The NHS Plan set out how by 2005 waiting times for seeing a GP will have fallen to 48 hours, to be seen in A&E to an average of 75 minutes, for an out-patients appointment to a maximum 3 months and for inpatient treatment to a maximum 6 months. By 2008 there will be waits for hospital treatment of weeks not months."

The Minister concluded: "In the next year, the investment we are making will deliver real progress towards these shorter waiting times. At present, for example, 126,000 patients are waiting over 26 weeks for an outpatient appointment. By March 2002 no one should be waiting that long and the number of people waiting for 13 weeks will have been reduced too."

"Similarly, the maximum waiting time for inpatient treatment is currently eighteen months. We estimate that about 50,000 people wait between 12 and 18 months. By Spring 2002 the NHS will have reduced the numbers waiting over 12 months and the maximum waiting time will have been reduced from 18 to 15 months for all patients."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 238/00 Tuesday 14 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

DON'T SELL OFF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL warns MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has again urged the Government to back off from its plan to privatise air traffic control.

Tomorrow (Wednesday) the Transport Bill returns to the Commons from the House of Lords which voted in favour of two amendments to the NATS (National Air Traffic Services) privatisation plans - one to delay privatisation until after the General Election and one to protect staff pension entitlements.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I hope the Government will not try to overturn these amendments - but I suspect it will. The NATS proposals were not in Labour's manifesto and there is no compelling financial reason why we need to do this. The air traffic controllers don't want it and neither do the pilots. No country has privatised its air traffic control - not even the USA. I want to see air traffic control remain firmly in public ownership."

There is a lobby of Parliament tomorrow (Wednesday 15 November) by the IPMS and PCS, the two NATS trade unions) and the airline pilots' union, BALPA.

On the last day before Parliament's summer recess in July 1999, the Government announced it intended to turn NATS into a public private partnership.

Note to Editors: The DETR in 1997 forecast air traffic growth. International traffic was expected to grow at a similar rate to total traffic - at an annual rate of 4.5% between 1995 and 2015... Short haul traffic is expected to grow at 4% a year over the same period, considerably less than long haul which is expected to grow at an annual rate of 5.5%

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 239/00 Wed 21 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP IN BID TO RESOLVE EARBY LIGHTING PROBLEM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has launched a fresh bid to resolve the street lighting problems of Earby. He has contacted Yorkshire Electricity and Lancashire County Council in an effort to get both organisations working together to tackle street lighting that fails too often, plunging the town into darkness.

Last week, Transport Minister, Keith Hill, told the Pendle MP that, of the 5 million street lighting columns in England, 27% (1.3 million) are more than 30 years old. The Government did not know the number of columns which were unsafe.

The Minister said: "Local authorities have agreed that a national condition survey for street lighting should be introduced, and that information from this should be used to compile a national inventory. Progress on this is still at an early stage although local authority representatives have agreed to submit proposals to DETR. The Highways Agency consider that current funding levels are sufficient to allow them to maintain the condition of the trunk road network at a level where there is no backlog of maintenance (either for structural maintenance or for street lighting)."

In January this year, the MP put the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Electricity under the spotlight following damning reports about street lights in Earby. The MP wanted to know why the people in the town were being left in the dark as a result of power failures.

The MP said: "The town's cabling system is over fifty years old and when a fuse blows it can affect up to twenty street lights. In fact there was a major incident in 1999 when houses were plunged into darkness and street lights went out."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 240/00 Wednesday 8 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOOD NEWS FOR FAR EAST PoWs says MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has described yesterday's announcement from the Government as marvellous news. All British service personnel who survived their time as prisoners of the Japanese in World War Two, whether members of the Armed Forces, merchant seamen or civilians, or their surviving spouses, will receive an ex-gratia payment of £10,000.

The Pendle MP has lobbied hard on the issue following representations from his local branch of the Royal British Legion. Last year he was in touch with the Prime Minister to argue the case for compensation after he had been approached by the British Legion's Lancashire Field Officer, Bob Ellis. Mr Ellis told the MP of the very strong feelings about the issue in the Pendle branches of the British Legion.

The MP said: "This announcement of compensation is great news, the former Far East PoWs deserve nothing less after the dreadful suffering they experienced. As the government has made clear this is a debt of honour which at long last has been repaid."

Note to Editors: The payments will total somewhere in the region of £165 million and will come on stream as soon as necessary legislation can be passed - probably early next year. On Sunday 12 November the Pendle MP will, as usual, be attending three of the Remembrance Day commemorations at Barnoldswick, Colne and Nelson.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 241/00 Wednesday 8 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SEVERE WEATHER HITS PENDLE

The severe weather that has hit the whole of our country is giving no impression of letting up says local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP said: "The entire country is still reeling following the unprecedented weather we've suffered. The floods have devastated thousands of homes and made travel hazardous at the very least. Here in Pendle we've had our fair share of problems. Many of our roads were hit by floodwater and Pendle Water came close to bursting its banks."

He continued: "Residents were evacuated from their homes in Barnoldswick and Earby and houses in Barrowford were again hit. Properties in Brierfield and Nelson were waterlogged and children at Blacko School were sent home after floodwaters rose."

The MP went on: “Local services have worked long and hard to ensure the problems were kept to a minimum. The announcement from the government of extra resources amounting to £51 million is welcome news. If defences in Pendle need strengthening then we will be pressing hard for our share of the money.”

He concluded: “The climate is clearly changing and it may be that this sort of weather will be happening more frequently. Lessons must be learned and we should be doing everything we can to not only prevent the dreadful damage wrought by the flooding but to look at the much wider issues of global warming.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 242/00 Thursday 9 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BUDGET BOOST FOR PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed yesterday’s pre-budget statement, saying it will make a huge difference to thousands of people in Pendle. Next April Pendle’s 16,259 pensioners will be getting an increase of £5 per week for the single person and £8 per week for a pensioner couple. For the less well off pensioner the new Minimum Income Guarantee goes up to £92.15. More good news for pensioners with the Winter Fuel Allowance being increased from £150 to £200. People will be getting this shortly.

Local schools will be getting their part of a £200 million windfall going to education countrywide. Every Primary School Head will be getting a cheque for between £4,000 and £7,000 with Secondary School Heads getting £10,000 to £30,000.

The Chancellor also announced a freeze on fuel duty until 2002 with cuts in duty on environmentally friendly Ultra Low Sulphur fuel. Vehicle Excise Duty on smaller cars under 1500cc will be slashed saving £55 per year for 5 million motorists.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said: “Pensioners deserve everything they’ve got. After a lifetime in work we don’t want to see any pensioner living in poverty. These big hikes in the Basic State Pension and the huge increase in the Minimum Income Guarantee will be, I hope, the first instalment in regular above inflation increases to narrow the gap between the retired and the rest of the population.”

The MP added: “I think the Chancellor got it right on fuel taxation and he will have drawn the sting from the fuel protest. No one likes paying a fortune for filling up their tank but we must move sharply towards environmentally friendly fuels and this does the trick.”

The MP concluded: “All in all I think it’s a pretty good package.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 243/00 Tuesday 14 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

A GRILLING IN STORE FOR LOCAL MP

Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP visits Barrowford School, Rushton Street, Barrowford on Friday 17 November at 10.00am

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is visiting Barrowford School this Friday to meet the staff and pupils. He has a busy timetable for the morning. First off is a school assembly where he will be giving a talk about his role as an MP and his work, both in Pendle and at Westminster. At break time he will be talking to both infant and junior staff about education matters in general and any specific issues of concern to them.

After break he will be grilled by the Junior School pupils who are having their own version of ‘Question Time’.

The MP said: “I am very much looking forward to my visit. I will have to make sure I am up to speed on current issues as I know I am in for some tough questions from the young people.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 244/00 Thursday 16 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO VISIT WARDLE STOREYS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is visiting manufacturers Wardle Storeys in Earby this Friday 17 November. The MP will be talking to the staff about manufacturing industry in general and to find out about the issues most concerning them at the moment.

Wardle Storeys is a medium sized company involved in the manufacture of both calendered and expanded PVC products. They supply both in the UK and abroad and employ 340 people.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 245/00 Tuesday 14 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ROADPEACE SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will again be attending the RoadPeace Service of Remembrance on Sunday 19 November at St John Great Marsden with St Philips, Barkerhouse Road, Nelson. The service begins at 3.00pm.

RoadPeace is a national charity for road traffic victims. They provide emotional and practical support to victims of road accidents. They also work to raise awareness of the dangers on the road. The church service is one of remembrance for all those who have been killed or injured on our roads.

The MP said: “Every year thousands are killed or maimed on our roads. We need to do all we can to make them safer. The RoadPeace Service of Remembrance is not only for people here in Pendle whose lives may have been devaststed by a road accident but also to raise awareness amongst the general public of the need for improved road safety.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 247/00 Tuesday 14 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NATIONAL RIGHT TO FUEL CAMPAIGN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is supporting the National Right to Fuel campaign and acknowledges the tremendous work it has achieved on its 25th Anniversary this year. The campaign to put an end to fuel poverty and to secure a warm, dry and well lit home has been widely supported over the years. Since June 2000 households unable to afford heat were beginning to be more easily identified under a targeted regional referral programme, part of the new Home Energy Efficiency Scheme.

The MP said: “Here in Pendle we have some of the poorest housing in the country. The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) can provide a grant of up to £2,000 to make some of these homes warmer, more energy efficient and more secure.”

HEES will focus on households with the greatest health risks - older people, people with children under 16 and people who are disabled or chronically sick.

The MP continued: “Tackling fuel poverty has to be top priority for the government. The National Right to Fuel campaign is working hard to stamp out fuel poverty. In this day and age no one should have to make choices between food or a warm home.”

HEES is funded by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. The scheme in East Lancs is run by the Eaga Partnership and they process all the applications. Anyone who thinks they may qualify for a grant can pick up a leaflet from the council or the MPs office in Nelson.

Note to Editor: In 1997 there were 48,874 unfit dwellings in East Lancashire which equates to more than 22% of the total housing stock. In Pendle it is estimated that there are 5,400 unfit houses. nearly all of which are situated within the private sector. Within Pendle’s SRB6 area 46% of the houses are

classified as unfit. In Pendle it is estimated that at least £150m is needed to deal with unfitness within the private sector housing stock. In 1996 6% of the Borough's private sector housing stock was empty

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 248/00 Tuesday 14 Novembewww.gordonprenticemp.com

EXTRA CASH FOR LANCASHIRE ROADS

The Government has announced a big boost in the money available to Lancashire County Council to deal with worn out roads and weakened bridges.

This week Ministers disclosed that the County Council would receive a capital allocation in 2001/2 for local road maintenance of £16,630,000 - up from £6,096,000 this year (2000/1). In 2002/3 the allocation increases to £17,782,000.

The allocations form part of the Government's Ten Year Plan for transport - a £180 billion investment package to modernise the nation's transport system, to cut congestion and deliver choice.

Speaking from Westminster, local MP Gordon Prentice, said: "The budget for repairing local roads in Lancashire has been more than doubled. Across the country, £535 million in 2001/02 and £555 million in 2002/03 will be made available to local authorities to spend on highway maintenance. This will be enough to start bringing our roads up to scratch again. Some of them are dire."

Transport Minister, Keith Hill, commented: "In our 10-Year Plan for transport, we pledged to rectify the backlogs in repairing carriageways, footways, bridges and street lighting. They've been in a poor state for long enough."

Note to Editors: The Local Transport Plan funding covers capital maintenance on Principal roads, bridges, footways, and, for the first time, non-principal roads.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 249/00 Thursday 16 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FAR EAST PoWs

The Secretary General of the Royal British Legion, Ian Townsend, has thanked Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, for his support for the Legion's campaign on behalf of the Far East Prisoners of War.

In a letter, dated 15 November, Mr Townsend spoke of the special £10,000 gratuity which will go to the former prisoners of war of the Japanese and their widows in recognition of the suffering they experienced during and after their captivity.

Mr Townsend wrote: "The generous settlement made by the Government is a triumph for democracy and a richly fitting tribute to all the 50,000 captured by the Japanese who suffered so terribly, both during captivity and afterwards."

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The legislation needed to give effect to the decision to award the gratuity will be introduced in the new session of Parliament which begins on 6 December. Clearly, we all want the payments to be made as quickly as possible."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 249/00 Thursday 16 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE JOBLESS DOWN AGAIN

The number of people out of work in Pendle in October and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,209 - down from 1,293 in September. This represents an unemployment rate of 3.5%. There were 902 men and 307 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count rose by 3,500 on the September figure and now stands at 1,047,300. Employment now stands at nearly 27,960,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Pendle has bucked the national trend this month. However, as always, we shouldn't read too much into one month's figures."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 250/00 Thursday 16 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP QUIZZES PRESCOTT ON IMPACT OF NEW URBAN WHITE PAPER ON EAST LANCS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed Government plans to revitalise run down urban areas. In a statement to the Commons this afternoon, Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, detailed tax breaks and incentives totalling £1 billion earmarked for towns and cities and designed to make them better places to live.

John Prescott told MPs the Government had set a target of ten years for bringing all social housing up to a decent standard. But the Pendle MP pressed him about the decaying private sector properties which blight East Lancashire.

The MP told the DPM: "One in five homes in East Lancashire is deemed to be unfit and 99% of them are in the private sector. We have a higher percentage of properties built before 1919 than any other area in the country. The scale of the problem is huge

and the area can't do it by itself." The MP called for extra Government help. Prescott told the MP he would look carefully at the issue and get back to him."

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "We've just got to keep apply steady but insistent pressure on the Government to make sure we get our fair share of the resources available. We have housing problems on a scale unimaginable elsewhere in the country."

The Housing Minister, Nick Raynsford, visited Pendle and Burnley last month to see for himself the state of the local housing stock.

Note to Editors: A comprehensive package of tax breaks and incentives worth an accumulative £l billion over five years was

more follows

URBAN WHITE PAPER

announced in the Pre-Budget Report (November 2000) to help make our towns and cities better places to live and work and so stimulate enterprise and employment. This package (to be introduced in the Budget 2001) is targeted at deprived areas, and includes:

• Complete exemption from stamp duty for all property transactions in most disadvantaged communities.

• Accelerated payable tax credit for the costs incurred in cleaning up contaminated sites.

• A 5% rate of VAT for the costs of converting residential properties into a different number of dwellings (e.g. houses into flats).

• An adjustment to the zero VAT rate to provide relief for the sale of renovated houses that have been empty for ten years or more.

• 100% capital allowance to property owners for the costs of converting redundant space over shops and other commercial premises into flats for letting.

In addition, the 'Modernising Local Government Finance' Green Paper is consulting on a number of local fiscal measures including:

Rate relief for small businesses which would apply throughout England

The introduction of a supplementary business rate as one option for funding Town Improvement Scheme; and

The introduction Of a Local Tax Reinvestment programme allowing local authorities to retain additional council tax and business rate income resulting from successful regeneration,

The Government also wants to improve the quality of the urban environment and protect green spaces. Good quality parks and play areas are essential to enhancing the quality of life. New measures include:

A dedicated £96m fund for parks and green spaces from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) Green 'Spaces Programme and £225m for parks from the Heritage Lottery Fund Urban Parks Programme,

Support for improving parks and public realm through proposed £150m NOF Transforming Communities Programme and £300m Active Community Programme.

Implementation of tougher protection over sale of school playing fields and new planning policy guidance on sports and recreation (PPG17) to protect playing fields and open spaces

Review the Compulsory Purchase system (CPO) to ensure it works speedily, effectively and fairly with legislation to follow. New guidance to local authorities on CPOs

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

Immediate Release. No 251/00 Wednesday 22 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PHOTOCALL - Gordon Prentice MP plants his Oak Tree at 10.45am on Friday 24 November 2000 in Victoria Park, Nelson

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be planting a two foot high oak sapling at 10.45am this Friday in Victoria Park, Nelson on behalf of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

Two years ago (on 11 November 1998) the Pendle MP gathered acorns with Burnley MP Peter Pike at the Foxhill Bank Nature Reserve, Oswaldtwistle. The acorns they collected were sent to the Forestry Commission nursery at Delamere in Cheshire where they were grown on ready for planting this month.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: “The oak tree I shall be planting on Friday is part of a nation-wide 'Trees of Time and Place' campaign where millions of people across the country were encouraged to collect seed from their favourite tree, grow it into a seedling and then plant their own tree for the new millennium. It was a great idea and I am hugely proud of what I think of as my oak tree. It will in due course become a mighty oak and it will be here long after I am gone.”

The MP is a keen supporter of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust especially their work in helping people to enjoy the natural world and their support for local community projects. The MP is an honorary fellow of The Landscape Institute, an organisation committed to making our living and working areas greener and pleasanter places.

Note to Editors: The MP will be accompanied by John Lamb of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust.
Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 252/00 Tuesday 21 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PORCHES OWNED BY ROAD TAX CHEATS GET CRUSHED ALONG WITH THE REST

Three Porche sports cars were among 10,205 crushed last year because their owners didn't have a road tax disc. Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has been a vigorous campaigner for a tough line on road tax dodgers.

Earlier this month Transport Minister, Keith Hill, told the MP that in 1997, 557 vehicles were impounded because their owners failed to buy a road fund licence. By 2000 this number had soared to 11,962. The number of vehicles crushed over the same period rose dramatically from 163 to 10,205.

Most cars that are crushed are Fords (3,303) followed by Vauxhall (1,369). Among the other makes, 40 Mercedes and 18 Skodas were crushed. Most vehicles crushed were 1987/8 vintage (1,842).

Note to Editors: Not having a current tax disc is illegal and could be expensive. Offenders face a fine of up to £1,000 for a private car or motorcycle and up to £26,000 for a heavy goods vehicle. In addition to paying a fine, convicted offenders will have to pay backduty penalties from the date the vehicle was last licensed, together with costs.

Note 2 to Editors: Separate sheets show vehicles crushed by make and by age.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

Immediate Release. No 253/00 Wednesday 22 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WANTS PENDLE 'FLOOD-PROOFED'

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has told Environment Agency chief, Sir John Harman, he wants to see his Pendle constituency "flood proofed".

The MP was responding to a letter from the Agency's chairman. Prentice says the November flood, which submerged vast areas of the country, was a warning the nation ignored at its peril.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Compared with some other parts of the country, Pendle got off lightly. Hopefully, we have a breathing space to get our flood defences in good order."

Note to Editors: The letter from the Chairman of the Environment Agency, Sir John Harman, to the Pendle MP reads : In many areas the floods have been the worst in living memory and have caused widespread disruption and misery to countless families and businesses across the country.

The cost of repairs will be high, but there can be no recompense for the loss of personal property and the trauma suffered by those concerned. We offer our sympathy to people affected and recognise that it may be a long time before those directly affected can resume anything like a normal life. Although flood levels have fallen back in many areas we continue to monitor the situation and give advice to those involved in the clean up.

Over the last two years our entire system of issuing flood warnings and responses to flood emergencies has been reviewed and improved and all the lessons learned from previous events have been implemented. A new National Flood Warning Centre has been established, new flood warning codes have been introduced and used on TV and new methods have been put in place to give early warning. These new systems have performed well under very testing conditions.

Since the start of October alone, over half a million calls have been made to our new emergency warning service FLOODLINE (0845 988 1188) and although some 6000 properties have been flooded nation-wide, the impact

more follows

could have been much worse but for the flood defences and the co-operation of the armed forces and emergency services. The real point, however, that we continue to make is that you cannot always prevent flooding, but you can plan for it.

Our Regional Directors and their staff have been working round the clock during this emergency to provide warnings, maintain defences and provide assistance at the local level. Over the next few weeks an immediate focus for the Agency will be to assess damage to flood defences and to put in place an urgent programme of repairs to ensure that lives and property continue. to be protected for the rest of the winter We will also be identifying any necessary longer-term structural repairs or improvements to existing defences as well as the necessity for new schemes,

At a national level, the Minister has asked us to conduct a lessons learned review of the recent floods which will be placed in the public domain. I very much hope this will stimulate a much needed on-going national debate on how all of us concerned should respond to the impact of global warming, development on flood plains and how future investment in defences should be directed.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

Immediate Release. No 254/00 Wednesday 22 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CHALLENGES BLAIR TO INCREASE PUBLIC STAKE IN RAILTRACK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon challenged the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to increase the Government's stake in Railtrack - the privately owned company responsible for maintaining the railway infrastructure.

At Prime Minister's Questions in the Commons, the Pendle MP told Blair: "The Government has just received in dividend payments, £300,000 in respect of its 0.2% equity stake in Railtrack. Will the Government use that money to increase its holding in the company?"

The PM did not hold out any prospect of this happening.

Speaking after the exchange, the MP said: "Huge amounts of public money are going into the railway network. Enormous subsidies are given to a multiplicity of train operating companies which are then passed on to Railtrack via track charges. This has allowed Railtrack to pay a 5% dividend to its investors - and that includes HMG."

The MP added: "The previous Government left us with a dog's breakfast of a railway. We are now making the investment after decades of neglect but the Government has to address the issue of structure and ownership."

"No-one in their right mind wants a return to dirty trains and curled sandwiches. We all want clean, fast and modern trains that run to time and arrive safely."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

Immediate Release. No 255/00 Wednesday 22 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP MEETS NEW PAKISTAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet the new High Commissioner for Pakistan, Abdul Kader Jaffer, tomorrow (Thursday).

The MP will be discussing current developments in Pakistan and the timetable for the return to democratic Government. Local elections are scheduled to be held over the coming months.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Pakistan has a fragile economy and is politically unstable. We all want to see a strong democracy take root in Pakistan."

"The unresolved question of Kashmir acts as a brake on development. It is a real tragedy that so little progress has been made."

The Pendle MP is a member of the Parliamentary All Party Pakistan Group.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 256/00 Thursday 23 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP LOOKS FORWARD TO RURAL WHITE PAPER

New Government policies for the countryside are to be unveiled next week. An announcement on the Rural White Paper has been pencilled in for Tuesday 28 November - the day the Commons considers the Lords amendments to the controversial Countryside and Rights of Way Bill which brings in the right to roam, a policy championed by the Pendle MP.

Speaking from Westminster today, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "The priorities of people in rural areas are the same as people living in cities and towns: decent jobs, good schools, a health service that can be depended on."

“We are also working to help farmers through very difficult times, providing millions of pounds in additional support and a new direction in agricultural policy. Indeed, I shall be speaking to my local branch of the National Framers Union on 5 December in Laneshawbridge and they certainly won’t pull their punches.”

“I know that people are concerned about the loss of village shops and post offices. The Government is doing its best to turn things round by introducing a 50% rate relief for village shops and post offices where they are the last remaining in their community. There will also be no preventable closures in the rural post office network and I am hopeful the proposed Universal Bank will help strengthen the position of rural post offices.”

The MP added: “The Conservative Opposition's "Fair Deal for Farming" is a complete pipe dream. At least seven of their key policies would require the UK to leave the European Union.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 257/00 Tuesday 28 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

RURAL WHITE PAPER SETS AGENDA says MP

The Rural White Paper, published today, outlines the real rural agenda, says local MP Gordon Prentice.

The new Rural White Paper, outlines a package of measures to tackle the real issues that matter to people in the countryside - jobs, hospitals, schools, post offices and transport. Backed up by £1 billion, the White Paper will ensure that quality public services and a thriving economy are brought to everyone in rural areas.

The Pendle MP commented: “The Government’s agenda will benefit areas such as Pendle. No doubt about it.”

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, MP said: "Our vision is of a living, working, protected and vibrant countryside - not an outdated, picture postcard version, but one where people have access to the jobs and services they require.”

Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, MP said: "What this White Paper makes clear is that farming remains central to the vitality of rural areas. Agriculture has been under

tremendous pressure. Since 1997, Labour has provided an extra £l billion to help the farming industry through difficult times. And the £1.6 bn England Rural Development Programme will provide vital support to help farming play its role in a diverse and successful rural economy and a properly protected countryside".

Note to Editors: What the Rural White Paper means:

- A new Rural Services Standard making clear for the first time what

more follows

RURAL WHITE PAPER SETS AGENDA says MP

services people living in the countryside can expect;

£239 million over the next three years to expand and develop rural transport, with a new £15 million Parish Fund for community based solutions;

- 50% mandatory rate relief reduction for village shops, pubs and garages which offer community benefit - subject to consultation;
- doubling the Housing Corporation funding to create over 3000 affordable homes a year in small rural communities, and planned consultation on giving local authorities discretion to scrap the 50% reduction in council tax on second homes;
- £37 million extra funding for market town regeneration to strengthen their role as a focal point for economic opportunity, bringing the total programme to £100 million;
- New primary health care one stop centres with internet and tele-links to hospitals or mobile units in over 100 rural communities worth £100 million;
- New additional aid to secure the future of small and medium sized abattoirs;
- Reduced VAT for repairs on listed churches;
- A rural proofing mechanism to ensure that Government policy makers "think rural";

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 258/00 Tuesday 28 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LANCASHIRE POLICE GET FUNDING BOOST NEXT YEAR

The police service will receive record level funding for the year 2001-2 with Lancashire getting an extra 4.2% - up from £185.3 million this year to £193 million in 2001/2.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said: "This spending package represents significant investment in the police service - one of the most comprehensive settlements that police forces have ever received, over ten per cent more in cash terms than the current financial year.

'The substantial increase in the special police grants will also ensure that particular projects announced earlier in the year will be translated into real cash benefits for individual forces. This means in reality more funding for recruitment and technology.

"We are determined that the police service across England and Wales will receive the resources it needs to fight crime. In return the public expect to see the performance of every force raised to the level of the best - in terms of improved efficiency and crime reduction."

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, added: “The police are in the front line. I want them to have the tools they need to do the job. But, like any other public service, once they have been given the money they’ve got to deliver.”

The settlement includes £30 million for a Rural Policing Fund to help address the pressures of poling rural areas.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 259/00 Thursday 30 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

YOUNG PEOPLE GET A NEW DEAL IN PENDLE

Since the New Deal started in April 1998 to the end of August this year, 787 young people in Pendle have started the New Deal. So far, 368 have found work through the programme. In addition, 179 have gained work experience or training through New Deal options.

Responding to the new official statistics earlier today, local MP, Gordon Prentice, congratulated local young people, employers and Employment Service staff as the Government’s pledge to get 250,000 young people off benefits and into work through

the New Deal has been met. The New Deal has played its part in creating a million new jobs since the election.

The MP said: “Since May 1997 the Government has cut youth unemployment by 70%. But the people who deserve our thanks are the employers, Personal Advisers and young people themselves who have made this possible. Pendle has played its part in the New Deal success story.”

The MP added: "By boosting the skills of the long-term unemployed, New Deal is helping us ensure everyone can benefit from economic prosperity. By cutting unemployment we have created a stronger economy, releasing more resources for public spending. In the early 1990s, 50p of every pound spent went on the costs of social and economic failure. Now that figure is only 17p - leaving more than 80p in every £1 of additional spending for hospitals, schools and vital public services, enabling us to tackle the long term under investment in Britain.”

Note to Editors: From next year, the New Deal will be available across the country to people aged 25 and over.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 260/00 Thursday 30 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR RE-THINK ON POLICE DECISION TO STEER CLEAR OF TRAWDEN AGRICULTURAL SHOW

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to urge Lancashire Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, to re-think the current police policy to charge the organisers of the Trawden Agricultural Show for policing the event. The organisers fear the charge could be as high as £3,000 although this is regarded as an over-estimate by the police.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The Trawden Show is a very popular day out for thousands of Pendle families. A huge amount of work goes into organising the show. Where there are lots of people there is always the risk of crime and it seems to me entirely proper that there should be a police presence - and that it shouldn’t cost the organisers an arm and a leg.”

Yesterday, the MP quizzed Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke, on the guidance he issues to police authorities concerning their policies for charging for policing agricultural shows.

The Minister told the MP: “The decision whether to charge for costs of policing at local events is a matter for the local police authority and the Chief Constable. Under Section 25 (1) of the Police Act 1996 'the Chief Officer of Police may provide, at the request of any person, special police services at any premises or in any locality in the police area for which the force is maintained, subject to the payment to the police authority of charges on such scales as may be determined by that authority.”

“The rationale behind charging is that the taxpayer at large should not be asked to pay for services provided at private events or events which benefit only a relatively small section of the community. It is for the Chief Officer concerned to determine *more follows*

MP CALLS FOR RE-THINK ON POLICE DECISION TO STEER CLEAR OF TRAWDEN AGRICULTURAL SHOW

whether a given service would constitute a special police service.”

“Special police services are not defined in the 1996 Act or elsewhere. I would expect them to be services that meet some or all of the following criteria: • they are not part of the general duty of the police to keep the peace and protect life and property; • the service to be provided is on private land; and • the service to be provided is for a commercially organised event.”

“Guidance on the policing of public events is provided by the Association of Chief Police Officers. This recognises the key role of event organisers and local agencies, particularly local authorities, in ensuring public safety at such events. The key role for the police is to ensure that public order is maintained and to deal with any criminal offences which occur.”

The Pendle MP responded: “The Minister’s reply sounds very reasonable but I think we need a bit of common sense and flexibility here.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 261/00 Thursday 30 November 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SERPS SCANDAL

In 1986 the previous Conservative Government changed the terms of SERPS so that, from April this year, a husband or wife could inherit a maximum of only half their spouse's entitlement.

Speaking from Westminster after the Social Security Secretary's statement to the Commons yesterday, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "It is as plain as a pikestaff that some people knew about the change but others did not. A leaflet issued in 1986 describing the change was withdrawn early in 1987. This was not corrected until 1996. Incorrect guidance to staff meant that incomplete or wrong information was given out to members of the public for some time after that."

"As a result, there is no doubt that a number of people were misled and so could have lost out. This is the terrible mess we inherited from the previous Government. We are sorting out the mess and giving justice to the people the Conservatives let down."

Note to Editors: The Social Security Secretary, Alistair Darling, wrote to the Pendle MP on 29 November as follows: "I am writing to inform you about our proposals for dealing with the change to the inherited State Earnings Related Pension.

In 1986 legislation was introduced to halve the amount of State Earnings related Pension (SERPS) that could be inherited by a surviving spouse. This change was to have been introduced in April this year.

There were two key problems with the decisions taken in 1986. First, the then Government proposed to implement the changes without any transitional period and secondly for years the public were given wrong, misleading or incomplete information about the change.

I announced in March deferral of the change in the inheritance rules by 2 years until 6 October 2002. No one, at all, will be affected by the policy

change before that date,

The proposals set out today are designed to give adequate notice of the change to SERPS rules, to provide for transitional arrangements for those approaching state pension age, and full protection, for all pensioners.

People who are already over state pension age cannot do anything to restore their position. So all those at state pension age by 5 October 2002 will have their position safeguarded. They will not have to do anything. There is no claim form to fill in - we will calculate their spouses' benefit automatically, They will be able to pass on up to 100% of their SERPS to the surviving spouse, as now.

For those within 10 years of state pension age, we will phase in the changes on a sliding scale to allow them to make alternative arrangements. The full phasing arrangements are set out in the table below.

% SERPS passing to surviving spouse	Date when contributor reached state pension age
100%	5.10.2002 or earlier
90%	6.10.2002 - 5.10.04
80%	6,10.2004 - 5.10.06
70%	6.10.2006 - 5.10.08
60%	6.10.2008 - 5.10.10

50%	6.10.2010 or later

There are a small number of people who have acted on wrong advice from the Department. For this small group the usual departmental rules in relation to maladministration will apply - and whose position is not resolved by today's announcement.

I will bring forward regulations in the New Year to implement these changes.

In order to make sure that people are informed about the changes I announced today, we will write this week to all those people who have been in touch with us already. And we will ensure there is widespread publicity to communicate these changes to all those who could be affected.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 262/00 Friday 8 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

7,900 PENDLE FAMILIES SET FOR £10pw TAX CUT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, signalled a cash boost for local families today in releasing details of the new Children's Tax Credit (CTC). The new tax break will be worth up to £520 a year from April.

The MP said: "New government figures show as many as 7,900 families in Pendle stand to gain a £10 a week tax cut after Labour's next Budget, with up to 600,000 families benefiting across the North West."

"Millions of application forms have been sent out but ministers tell me that some families with a right to the new tax credit have not returned their form. I urge any working family with a child under 16 to check with the CTC helpline on 0845 609 5000."

"At up to £520 a year, the new tax credit is far more generous than the old Married Couples Allowance it replaces, which was worth £197 a year when it was phased out. It also helps families when they need it most - while their children are growing up."

"We can invest s money in families only because we are following a course of stable and steady growth in the UK economy, This platform allows our Labour government to boost the income of families and pensioners alike, and invest in front-line services like our NHS, our schools and our police forces."

"The Conservatives have pledged to axe this new Children's Tax Credit and the Working Families Tax Credit. They would also abolish help for pensioners like the winter fuel allowance, the free television licence for the over 75s and even the pensioners' £10 Christmas Bonus."

more follows

7,900 PENDLE FAMILIES SET FOR £10pw TAX CUT

Note to Editors: The Government wants every child to have the best possible start in life. The Children's Tax Credit (CTC), to be introduced in April, is a major plank in the fight against child poverty. It is a targeted Labour tax Cut.

About five million families will gain up to £8.50 a week - £442 a year on top of the child benefit paid to each child.

Further, in his Pre-Budget Speech on 8 November, the Chancellor,
Gordon Brown, told the House of Commons:

"I believe that in the coming Budget, we can offer a larger tax cut for families. My aim is to increase the family tax cut to £10 a week, in total £520 a year tax cut that will increase families' incomes"

CTC is a new income tax relief for people who have at least one child under the age of 16. It replaces the Married Couples Allowance (MCA) and unlike the MCA - finally phased out last April and worth only £197 a year - the Children's Tax Credit provides help for families when they need it most - when their children are growing up.

Unlike the MCA, the Children's Tax Credit is also a targeted tax cut, ensuring that we can substantially increase support for families with children and concentrate help on those who need it most:

The CTC will be tapered, so that it is gradually withdrawn at a rate of £1 for every £15 of income above the point at which they start to pay higher rate tax.

The Children's Tax Credit is only one of a programme of measures intended to tackle child poverty. Other measures include:

• The biggest ever increase in child benefit - 26 per cent in real terms - from £11 a week at the 1997 election to £15.50 a week for the oldest child.

• The Working Families Tax Credit, worth on average £30 a week more than family credit for over a million working families

• The new 10p starting rate of income tax introduced in April 1999 and the cut in the basic rate of income tax from 23% to 22% from April 2000.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 263/00 Monday 11 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS MOVE TO SAFEGUARD CHRISTMAS DAY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a move to protect shop workers from demands to work on Christmas Day.

A Commons motion - tabled by former Consumer Affairs Minister, Nigel Griffiths - which supports a campaign being run by the shop workers' USDAW, "regrets that many shops remain open on Christmas Day because employers put undue pressure on shop workers to abandon their family responsibilities on this important religious and public holiday".

Speaking from Westminster, Gordon Prentice said: "People can shop until they drop almost the whole year round. But they need shop workers to serve them. Is it too much to ask that Christmas Day is ring-fenced so shop workers can relax and put their feet up."

Note to Editors: The Commons motion reads: "This House cherishes Christmas Day as a special day, particularly for families and children, and welcomes the campaign by Usdaw, the shop workers' union, on behalf of the 2.6 million shop workers of United Kingdom; regrets that many shops remain open on Christmas Day because employers put undue pressure on shop workers to abandon their family responsibilities on this important religious and public holiday; notes that the vast majority of shop workers are parents who should be able to spend Christmas with their children; notes that current law offers no protection to such workers when Christmas day does not fall on a Sunday; notes that Christmas is an extremely busy and stressful period for shop workers and believes they deserve at least one day off, and calls on the Government to protect shop workers on Christmas day,

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 264/00 Tuesday 12 December 2000

www.gordonprenticemp.com

CHILD'S PLAY FOR MP
Photocall: - Gordon Prentice MP at Kelbrook Millennium Play Area, Kelbrook School on Saturday 16 December at 11.00am

Local MP. Gordon Prentice, will be attending the official opening of the Kelbrook Millennium Play Area this Saturday 16 December.

The MP was invited by Kelbrook and Sough Parish Council who have masterminded the project. They raised a lot of the money needed themselves but also received funding from the North West Development Agency Rural Development Programme and Pendle Borough Council. The play area is on Kelbrook Primary School's field and was built by a local firm in Barnoldswick.

The MP said: "This play area is great for the children of Kelbrook. Kelbrook and Sough Parish Council deserve a tribute as it was their hard work in organising and fund raising that meant this play area could be built."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 265/00 Wednesday 13 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE JOBLESS DOWN AGAIN

The number of people out of work in Pendle in November and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,099 - down from 1,209 in October. This represents an unemployment rate of 3.2%. There were 824 men and 275 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count reversed the rise in October and fell by 5,300 on the September figure and now stands at 1,042,400. Employment now stands at nearly 27,980,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Pendle jobless figures have now been falling steadily since February of this year and mirrors the long running downward trend taking place nationally."

The MP continued: “However, this good news is somewhat soured following the announcement yesterday that Vauxhall are to axe 2,000 jobs with the closure of its car plant in Luton. This is a fresh blow to the manufacturing sector, which saw 95,000 jobs lost in the three months to October and clearly the problems for manufacturers need to be addressed sooner rather than later.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 266/00 Wednesday 20 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BILLBOARD CONTROLS STILL NEEDED says MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing the Government to think twice before it relaxes controls on advertising billboards.

His move follows an approach by the Lancashire Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) who urged the
MP to help prevent a rash of advertising hoardings disfiguring the countryside.

The CPRE want the Government to reconsider its proposal to leave the decision on where hoardings go to individual planning authorities. The CPRE say the countryside needs protection from commercial interests and landowners.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said: “No-one in their right mind wants to see a barrage of billboards along our country roads.”

Environment Minister, Beverley Hughes, has now told the MP the Government has decided not to change the current system but wants to make sure it was being used as originally intended.

The Government is concerned that the operation of Areas of Special Control of Advertisements (ASCAs) is not working as envisaged. ASCAs are supposed to be reviewed every 5 years by local planning authorities and this has not always been done. The status of some areas has changed over time to the extent that they no longer meet the criteria for designation.

more follows.....

BILLBOARD CONTROLS STILL NEEDED says MP

The Minister told the MP that local planning authorities are being asked to undertake a review of ASCAs in their areas to satisfy themselves that their extent remains appropriate and necessary.

The Pendle MP said: "It's all a question of balance. We can't have the Yorkshire Dales looking like the approach road to Las Vegas."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 268/00 Thursday 21 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BIG BOOST IN CHILDCARE PLACES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement from the DfEE of major investment in the expansion of nursery education over the next three years. In Pendle this year there is a total of 47 new out-of-school places and 49 new pre-school places.

The MP said: "Children in Pendle deserve the best possible start to their education. These new places are a big step forward in giving them that. The Government is committed to achieving free nursery education for all three year olds by 2004."

Each local authority has set up an Early Education Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) to plan for expansion and integration of services. 120,000 new, free early education places have been created between 1997 and 2000 - most in the voluntary and private sectors. All four year olds who want one have a free place. Every three year old whose parents want them to have one will have a free nursery education place by September 2004.

The MP said: "No-one can underestimate how important a child's education is. The Government recognises this - as I do. Total spending on nursery education has increased from £1 billion in 1996-97 to £1.6 billion in 2000-2001 and will rise to £2 million in 2003-04. This has to be good news."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 269/00 Thursday 21 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

EVERYONE A WINNER!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is delighted by the news that nearly £4 million has been awarded to good causes in Pendle. To date 46 organisations have received money including ten awards for this year.

The MP said: "The lottery money has benefited a whole range of groups in Pendle. I am still keen, however, to see a lot more money coming back and benefiting organisations and not just in this area."

The average spend on lottery tickets is about £3.34 per week and around 30 million people play The National Lottery regularly.

The MP continued, : "Camelot have just won the battle to continue to run the lottery although the People's Lottery boss, Richard Branson, has yet to decide whether he will appeal against the decision. Once the dust has settled we need to see the promise of increased awards for good causes come to fruition."

Note to editor: The total sales to date of The National Lottery are £30.3 billion with money raised for good causes currently standing at £9.2 billion.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 270/00 Thursday 14 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

WIPE OUT DEBT OF POOREST COUNTRIES urges MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has applauded the Government's initiative in wiping out the debt owed to the UK by 41 of the poorest nations in the world.

Debts have been written off for twenty countries by the UK on the grounds that they have put poverty reduction programmes in place. A further 21 who are wracked by conflict, civil war or institutional break-down will have their debt repayments to the UK placed in a special trust fund and the money will be returned to them once they too have demonstrated that they are tackling poverty in their own countries.

Speaking from Westminster on his return from a United Nations conference in Bonn, Germany on Desertification, the MP said: "Britain is leading the way internationally on this pressing issue of debt forgiveness. It is absolutely the right thing to do."

Earlier today in the Commons, the MP urged the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, to make time available for an early debate of the International Development White Paper published by Clare Short last week.

Note to Editors: The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, wrote to the Pendle MP today as follows: "We are writing to inform you of some of the latest developments on the issue of debt relief in developing countries, and to provide information you may wish to pass on to faith leaders and constituents who have taken an interest in recent developments on this matter of great concern. The enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) was launched last year to enable debt relief to be delivered as quickly as possible to the poorest countries.

more follows

WIPE OUT DEBT OF POOREST COUNTRIES urges MP

This summer the IMF and the World Bank committed that 20 countries would receive debt relief by the end of this year. The Managing Director of the IMF, Horst Kohler, attended a seminar held in Downing Street on 8 September with representatives of a wide range of NGOs and Faith leaders where he explained in person how this would be achieved. This commitment was reiterated at the annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Prague later in September.

13 countries - including Bolivia, Cameroon, Mauritania, Honduras, Guyana, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) have had debt relief agreed, with a further seven expected to be approved in the next two weeks. Nearly $50bn in debt relief will be given to these first 20 countries.

But there is a great deal still to do to get debt relief to the 41 countries that are part of the HIPC initiative. Even if 20 countries start receiving debt relief this year, 21 will for a range of reasons not yet be able to benefit.
The majority are affected by conflict - whether through civil war or external aggression. Others do not yet have clear Poverty Reduction Strategies which show how the savings from debt relief will flow to spending on poverty reduction. We expect some of them to qualify in the first months of 2001.

The Government announced on 2nd December that it will place payments to the UK made by all those countries not yet receiving debt relief, into trust for the day when they can be returned to fund poverty reduction. The UK will not benefit from any payments received. The Government's only concern is to see debt relief benefit the poorest, and to help countries turn away from conflict. That is also why, in addition to this most recent announcement, the Spending Review in July announced new cross-Government arrangements on conflict prevention and resolution in sub-Saharan Africa backed by a real terms increase in resources of 42% over the next 3 years.

The Government will continue to make every effort to help countries to receive debt relief in the year ahead, and seek to build a virtuous circle of debt relief, poverty reduction and economic growth in the poorest countries.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 271/00 Monday 18 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE HOUSE OWNERS SAVING A SMALL FORTUNE ON MORTGAGE REPAYMENTS says MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, revealed new figures today that show local homeowners are saving up to £1,000 a year due to lower and stable mortgage rates.

The MP claims around 26,300 homeowners in Pendle are benefiting from the policy of economic stability. Latest figures show that mortgage rates are on average 4% less than they were under the previous Government.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Mortgage rates averaged 11% under the previous government. Since the new Government came in, mortgage rates have been low and stable, averaging only 7%.”

“This has not come about by accident", the MP explained. “It is because we took the tough decisions - independence for the Bank of England, paying off national debt and sorting out the public finances - that we are able to put an end to the damaging cycle of boom and bust.”

The MP added: “Many of us remember the policies of the late 80s and early 90s that led to interest rates at 15% for a full year. We don’t want to go back to those days. No way.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 272/00 Monday 18 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS MOVE TO CRACK DOWN ON CAR CRIME

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a renewed drive to crack down hard on car crime. The MP, whose car was vandalised last year when the paint work was scored deeply along the vehicle’s entire length, is strongly in favour of tough action.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The Vehicle (Crime) Bill - which comes up for second reading before the Commons this afternoon - will help us tighten the screw on car thieves and protect the motorist from car theft and legitimate salvage traders from unfair competition by criminals in the industry.”

The MP added: “Car crime has been fallen by 15% since the new Government came to office, and we have set a challenging target of reducing it by 30% by 2004. To reach that target we have to deal with the staggering figure of 120,000 vehicles which are stolen but never recovered each year - many of which are broken down for parts or are resold with a new identity.”

Note to Editors: This new Bill will regulate motor salvage dealers so preventing the theft of almost 40,000 vehicles a year and

• Control the supply of number plates

• Extend the time limit for evidence for taking without authority from six months to three years

• Use money from speed camera enforcement to improve road safety with the national roll-out of speed cameras

• introduce compulsory vehicle identity checks across the whole of the United Kingdom for any written-off vehicle presented for re-registration

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 273/00 Monday 18 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP URGES GOVERNMENT TO RE-DOUBLE EFFORTS TO GET EXTRA CASH TO POOREST PENSIONERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged the Government to pull out all the stops to get the Minimum Income Guarantee to the country's poorest pensioners.

During Social Security questions in the Commons today, the MP pressed the Minister, Alistair Darling, to arrange for teams of people to knock on pensioners' doors to boost the take-up of MIG.

The MP told the House that 6 weeks ago the Government confirmed that 500,000 people who were entitled to MIG had not taken it up. Darling said that as a result of the take-up campaign - which has been running for over 6 months - an additional 62,000 pensioners were now getting the extra help. Currently, around two million pensioners and pensioner couples benefit from the MIG.

But Prentice told the Minister: "The issue is not about how many have applied unsuccessfully for MIG because they have too much money in the bank, but about those who are not claiming in the first place. I suspect we are talking about the very elderly and frail and those with failing eyesight or hearing. We need people to knock on doors to make sure these pensioners their entitlement."

The Minister said the Government wanted to increase take up and was looking at ways of achieving this. Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "We've got to make sure that everyone who can benefit does claim. From next April the Minimum Income Guarantee for a single pensioner will be £92.15 pw and £140.55 for pensioner couples. And it will be at least £100 for a single pensioner and £154 for a couple in April 2003."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 274/00 Thursday 21 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BARROWFORD SCHOOL VOTE GETS COMMONS MENTION IN HUNTING DEBATE

A vote by children at Barrowford School to ban hunting with dogs was cited as evidence of the typical view of young people everywhere by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was speaking in the debate yesterday on the Hunting Bill which sets out three options - the status quo, regulation or a ban - which will be voted on next month.

The MP visited the school on 17 November and gave a talk about his role as an MP and his work, both in Pendle and at Westminster, and touched on some animal welfare issues. He was also grilled by the Junior School pupils who had their own version of 'Question Time'.

The MP told the Commons: "The people who do not need persuading (to ban blood sports) are the younger generation. Only a few weeks ago, I went to Barrowford county primary school and addressed an assembly of a couple of hundred children aged between four and 11."

"I told them that I would mention them in the Chamber of the House of Commons. I was talking about animal welfare issues and I asked how many of the children wanted to see hunting banned. Without any prompting, a forest of little arms went up."

"Only two or three did not want it banned. If Conservative members spoke to young people in the primary schools in their constituencies, they would not find a majority in favour of continuing the killing for fun. Believe me."

more follows
HUNTING DEBATE

The MP continued: “The issue is not one of Labour versus the Conservatives, although it is often posed in such a way. Ann Widdecombe and Roger Gale are not the only ones who want hunting with dogs to be banned.”

“What about Steve Norris, the standard bearer for the Conservatives in the London mayoral elections? What about the astronomer, Patrick Moore? He is against hunting.”

“What about your predecessor, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the previous Parliament, Dame Janet Fookes? They are all leading Conservatives who want hunting with dogs to be banned.”

“What about the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals? It is not a nest of rolling-eyed lefties. It is a blue chip organisation, of which millions of people are members. Who is the patron of the RSPCA? It is Her Majesty the Queen, is it not? The RSPCA has written to us to say:

> the only option that can be fully justified on scientific, common sense and moral grounds is a complete ban.

“I shall be voting for a complete ban. I am disappointed, because I get on well with him, that the Home Secretary will not be doing so, but his view does not reflect the majority in the House.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 275/00 Friday 22 December 2000
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO PRESS FOR PUNITIVE ACTION TO PREVENT REPEAT OF ROTTEN POULTRY FRAUD

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, gave notice today that he would be pressing for harsh new penalties for those convicted of flouting food safety laws.

The MP said he was astonished and angered at the “lenient sentences” handed out to five men who were convicted of a nationwide fraud to sell rotten poultry meat for human consumption. One of the ringleaders was sentenced to seven years in prison - a term the MP condemned as “totally inadequate”.

Hundreds of tonnes of contaminated turkey and chicken meat - earmarked for pet food - ended up in restaurants, supermarkets and in markets across the UK, netting the fraudsters over two million pounds profit.

The trial judge at Hull Crown Court, Judge Peter Heppel QC said: ``A fraud of this type and of this scale is unprecedented in this country." He also called for a review of food safety laws to allow for heavier penalties.

Speaking from Nelson, in his Pendle constituency, earlier today, the MP said: “It beggars belief that people would do this. They knowingly risked poisoning the rest of us to make a profit. It is absolutely horrifying.”

The MP confessed: “My first reaction on hearing of this was to condemn the fraudsters to their years in prison eating the same rotten meat they were content to supply to others.”

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 001/01 Tuesday 2 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP SHORT LISTED FOR CHANNEL 4 “BACKBENCHER OF THE YEAR” AWARD

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has been short listed for this year’s Channel 4 “Parliamentary Performer of the year” award.

The final vote - in a secret ballot of all MPs - will take place this month with the result announced at a special Channel 4 lunch in London on Wednesday 7 February. The event will be filmed and then broadcast on Saturday 10 February.

Other contenders include Transport Select Committee chair, Gwyneth Dunwoody, who argued the case against the privatisation of air traffic control and stood unsuccessfully for the Speakership; Eric Forth, the maverick former Conservative Education minister, and Stephen Pound, the MP for Ealing.

There are four awards including the political humourist of the year and the political journalist of the year.

Commenting on his appearance on the short list, the Pendle MP said: “Quite frankly, I am astonished.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 002/01 Wednesday 3 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NEW HOPE FOR CURE FOR KILLER DISEASES says MP

New medical advances which could cure killer diseases such as cancer, or debilitating conditions such as Parkinson’s and MS, are now on the horizon says local MP, Gordon Prentice. His statement follows the vote last month in the House of Commons which allows research on stem cells (embryos under 14 days).
Many scientists are convinced that hugely significant medical advances are possible if we can unlock the mysteries of the stem cells.

A group of leading medical charities including the Cancer Research Campaign, Parkinson’s Disease Society and the Association of Medical Research Charities have thanked the MP for supporting the Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Research Purposes) Regulations.

The MP said: “There has been a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding about the whole issue of stem cell research. This is not about human cloning. That is illegal and the Government, as I am, is strongly opposed to it.”

The MP continued: “The purpose of the regulations is to promote research which could lead to treatment and cures for illnesses such as Parkinson’s, diabetes and MS. These dreadful diseases can strike any of us down at any time.”

In a letter from the Association of Medical Research Charities the MP was told that since the vote many patients have contacted them to say how thankful they are that

MPs have understood their hopes for stem cell therapies and have given their support for the research.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 003/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

A MEETING OF MINDS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be outlining the Government's plans to reform the Mental Health Act when he speaks to the local branch of the mental health charity, MIND, this Thursday, 11 January, at the Fernandes Day Centre, North Street, Burnley.

Speaking from Westminster earlier this week, the MP said: "Reforming mental health legislation is a key priority for the Government. The last full review took place half a century ago in the 1950s."

"But we are not simply "reviewing". We are also putting in extra investment - worth £300m - and by April this year there will be almost 500 extra secure beds, over 320 24 hour staffed beds and 170 outreach teams."

The MP added: "I am looking forward to meeting the people from Mind and Making Space and to hear their views and ideas about how we can help people who suffer from - and are recovering from - mental illness."

Note to Editors: In July 1999, the Government published the earlier White Paper, Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation, setting out its overall health strategy. The White Paper set targets to combat the four causes of premature death - cancer, coronary heart disease, accidental injury and mental illness. The target for the latter was to reduce the death rate from suicide and undetermined injury by at least one fifth.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 004/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

HORSFIELD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be fielding questions from members of the Horsfield Community Association this Thursday 11 January at Byron Road Social Centre in Colne. The Association is keen to hear the MP's views on initiatives the Government is taking to crack down on anti-social behaviour.

The MP said: "I am always more than happy to speak to community groups and listen to peoples concerns. It may be that crime is the big issue or perhaps housing conditions or some other matter and more often than not we can tackle these successfully by working constructively together with the help of the Council, the Police and other agencies."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 005/01 Monday 8 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

DISMAY AT DAIRY CLOSURE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, expressed dismay at the loss of around 120 jobs at the West Marton Creamery announced on the last working day before Christmas. The dairy falls just outside the MP's Pendle constituency, however, many of the workers live in West Craven.

The redundancies were made following the decision by receivers BDO Stoy Hayward, to close the dairy after failing to sell the parent company, British Creameries. The plight of British Creameries was blamed on significant financial losses over the last year.

The MP said: "This was a shock to us all. There were a number of buyers interested in British Creameries but they have all fallen by the wayside. It also a mystery as to why the company's other sites in the Midlands and Hereford have been allowed to remain open while the receivers continue to try to find a buyer for them."

The GMB Union, which represents a large number of the workforce, told the MP that they were astonished by the closure of West Marton. They say they met the receivers before Christmas and were given assurances at the time that a take over was on the cards.

The MP said: "The key issue here is that there was a possibility of the company being sold as a going concern and we are all at a loss as to why this has not happened. I am meeting a representative of the GMB Union this Friday to co-ordinate a plan of action."

He concluded: "The Creamery made speciality cheeses and with the recent flourishing of farmer's markets, including those at Colne and Nelson, there is clearly a demand for such products. I am in touch with DTI Ministers about this whole sorry business."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 006/01 Monday 8 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRIVATE SECURITY FIRMS MAY GUARD THE POLICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today quizzed Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, on the decision by the Lancashire Police to go out to tender to see if private security firms would be prepared to guard their Hutton HQ outside Preston. If the police

decide to let the contract to the private sector the cost is estimated at £150,000 a year over the next three years.

In the Commons this afternoon, the Pendle MP wondered aloud where the criminals were who were preparing to break into a police HQ "staffed round the clock by police officers working 365 days a year". He asked: "What is wrong with using police probationers to patrol the grounds?"

"And where is this contracting out culture taking us? Are we going to see Group 4 guarding the soldiers at Preston barracks?"

The Minister told the MP that no guidance had been issued by the Home Office to police force on the use of private security firms to protect Police HQs. The Minister said it was a matter for the police taking into account the principles of "best value".

Speaking after the exchange, the MP asked: "I wonder how many Police HQs have been broken into or vandalised over recent years. I suspect, not many. And if the threat is from terrorists then Group 4 or Securicor is hardly likely to deter them."

"£150,000 a year could get quite a few police constables."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 007/01 Monday 8 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES MOVE TO EASIER HOME BUYING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed proposals in the Homes Bill - debated in Parliament today - which will help take the stress out of buying and selling a home. The legislation will make it mandatory for the seller to supply a "seller's pack" to prospective purchasers giving details of the property and its condition.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is a great idea whose time has come. For too long, buying a home has been a litany of grief and disappointment for too many people. We need to simplify and clarify the procedures. The new pack will be widely welcomed."

The Government sponsored research into how seller's information packs might operate in areas where demand for housing is low and property values are typically

less than £30,000. Case studies were conducted in Burnley and Bradford. These showed that buyers, sellers and professionals thought the pack (specifically its cost) might encourage some uncommitted sellers out of the market and thereby assist in tackling the problem of over supply. Neither buyers nor sellers supported the idea that the pack should not apply to "cheaper end" properties. There was concern that this would contribute to an area's decline. There were also concerns about the "shelf life" of the pack as properties can be on the market for some time.

There was also a feeling that preparing sellers was only part of the problem. Sales also fall through because buyers are unprepared or unable to support the bid price. It was felt purchasers should have a mortgage guarantee certificate.

more follows:

MP WELCOMES MOVE TO EASIER HOME BUYING

• The Government's aim is to help the 1.5m individuals and families who buy and sell homes each year. The Homes Bill will make the home buying and selling process easier and less stressful, faster, more transparent and more certain. People should be much more confident that when an offer has been accepted, the sale will go through and will do so reasonably quickly.

• The extensive research carried out over the last 3 years confirms that the home buying and selling process in England and Wales is among the slowest in Europe, is fraught with delays and failed transactions, encourages problems such as gazumping, and does not look after the interests of home buyers and sellers. 40 per cent of people are dissatisfied with the process.

• 28 per cent of transactions fail after terms have been agreed. This means hundreds of thousands of people each year suffering lengthy periods of uncertainty, stress, and abortive costs which usually run into hundreds of pounds, sometimes thousands.

• The research and the consultation which followed it, produced an almost unanimous view that there needs to be greater transparency in the process so that there are no hidden problems which can threaten the transaction at a later stage. The proposals have the backing of the Consumers Association, leading building societies, such as Nationwide, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the National Association of Estate Agents.

• The Homes Bill addresses this by introducing a new statutory requirement that, before putting a home on the market, the seller or the seller's agent must put together a 'sellers- pack' of standard documents for prospective buyers.

• The content of the seller's pack will be prescribed by statutory instrument. It will contain the standard documents which home sellers currently need to provide at some stage during the process, plus replies to local search enquiries and a 'home condition report' based on a professional survey of the property.

• Only home condition inspectors certified by an independent body under a scheme approved by the Secretary of State will be able to provide home condition reports. The inspector will have professional indemnity insurance and will be liable to the buyer, as well as the seller, for the accuracy of the report.

• The seller's pack will provide at the very start of the process, most of the documents and information needed to en-enable the transaction to proceed speedily. This will allow a significant shortening of the period of uncertainty between offer acceptance and exchange of contracts, thus restricting the window within which gazumping and other problems commonly occur. The seller's pack is expected to be introduced in England and Wales on a compulsory basis in 2003, providing time to prepare the public, solicitors, estate agents, building societies etc.,

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 008/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TOURS COMMONWEALTH GAMES VENUES

Pendle MP Gordon Prentice, will be visiting the venues for next year's XVII Commonwealth Games in Manchester, this Friday, 12 January .

The MP is a keen and enthusiastic member of the All Party Pallamentary Group which is backing the Games. The MP will be visiting the impressive facilities being built for the Games and will be briefed by Frances Done, the Chief Executive of the Games.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Games will give Manchester and the North West a huge boost - a real shot in the arm and I want to play my part in ensuring they are a runaway success."

"The Games will provide an important shop window for the North West. And we've got lots to offer."

The MP added: "It will also be great fun."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 008/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

EAST LANCS SUMMIT AT WESTMINSTER

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is joining forces at Westminster on Tuesday 16 January with other East Lancashire MPs and the Director of East Lancashire Partnership, John Tilley, to discuss topical issues and to chart a way forward for the area.

The East Lancashire Partnership (ELP) is a body made up of private and public sector organisations. It examines and develops strategies to regenerate the region, develop new skills and bring in new jobs. ELP recently secured £5 million to create an East Lancashire park land and they are currently developing the East Lancashire Rapid Transit Scheme.

The MP said: "The East Lancashire Partnership has the crucially important task of bringing forward proposals for the region's economic regeneration. We all want it to be a huge success."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 008/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BACK TO SCHOOL - AGAIN!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is looking forward to a grilling next Thursday (18 January) from students at Stonyhurst College, over in the Ribble Valley. The MP was invited by a pupil who lives in Pendle to give a talk to their Political Society.

The MP said: "I shall be talking to the students about my life as an MP, however I expect to be quizzed over a wide range of issues covering all aspects of my work."

The MP continued: "I always enjoy my school visits in Pendle. I have recently visited Barrowford Primary School and in February I will be opening a new extension at Coates Primary School in Barnoldswick."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 009/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CASTLE CEMENT CONCERNS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be calling in at the Environment Agency in Preston on Friday 19 January for a personal briefing on the latest developments at the Castle Cement plant at Clitheroe.

The works at Clitheroe are outside the MP's constituency, however he has always kept up to speed with what is going on there. For years, controversy has raged over the company's decision to burn the substitute fuel, Cemfuel, at the plant. Restrictions and conditions have been imposed as the Environment Agency and the company responded to concerns from local people.

The Environment Agency told the MP that Castle Cement has again applied to burn Cemfuel. The fuel is classified as hazardous waste and safety considerations are paramount.

Before Christmas, the Environment Agency held a number of public surgeries in Clitheroe to allow the public to discuss the application.

The MP said: "The Environment Agency is our watchdog and it is right that they should be keeping an eye on any developments at Castle Cement. It is also right for them to consult all interested parties in any decisions that have to be made. These decisions could affect us all."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 012/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NEW HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

New rules allowing extra help worth £38.65p per week for 3 and 4 year olds with disabilities come into force on 9 April.

The change has been warmly welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice, who is anxious to make sure that every eligible child is identified by the Department of Social Security.

Note to Editors: Social Security Minister, Hugh Bayley, wrote to the Pendle MP yesterday as follows: "I am writing to let you know - or to remind you - that from 9th April 2001 the law will change to allow children aged 3 and 4 to qualify for the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance. Until now, children have had to be 5 years old before they could qualify for this extra money.

The drive for this change came from the consultation paper 'A new Contract for Welfare: Support for Disabled People'. Giving help to disabled children early on in their development will help them achieve their full potential and lead as normal a life as possible. Providing this financial help towards mobility needs Will protect against social exclusion and help ensure that a young, disabled child does not miss out on educational and therapeutic opportunities.

If a child is awarded the higher rate mobility component they will get **£38:65** a week (the benefit rate from 9 April 2001). As you will be aware, the payment is not means tested or taxable, and does not depend on National Insurance contributions.

A child awarded the higher rate mobility component would also - if the award was of sufficient duration - be eligible for help under the terms of the Motability scheme,

Most children likely to benefit will already be receiving one of the Care Components of Disability Living Allowance. This means they are already known to the Department and arrangements have been made to write out in every case to the person who deals with the child's benefit to invite them to apply for the higher rate mobility component."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 013/01 Tuesday 9 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP IN COMMONS MOVE TO PREVENT REPEAT OF "PETFOOD FOR HUMANS" SCAM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Milburn, to make a Commons statement on the rotten poultry case, reported last month, where five men were convicted at Hull Crown Court for their part in a nationwide fraud to pass off adulterated and contaminated meat as fit for human consumption.

Just before Christmas, the outraged MP gave notice that he would be pressing for harsh new penalties for those convicted of flouting food safety laws. At the time he confessed he was astonished and angered at the "lenient sentences" handed out. The ringleader was sentenced to seven years in prison - a term the MP condemned as "totally inadequate". The trial judge had called for a review of food safety laws to allow for heavier penalties.

The MP has also tabled a Commons motion urging action which appears on the Order Paper today.

Hundreds of tonnes of contaminated turkey and chicken meat ended up in restaurants, supermarkets and in markets across the UK, netting the fraudsters over two million pounds profit.

Note to Editors: The MP's Commons Motion reads: "This House endorses the view of Judge Peter Heppell QC who reportedly told the Crown Court in Hull in December 2000 that a review of the penalties for contravening the Food Safety Act should be put in train; considers the sentences available to the Court in cases where adulterated and rotten meat destined for the petfood market ends up in food for humans, are totally inadequate; and calls on the Government to act swiftly to increase the powers available to the courts, and to restore confidence in the food industry."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 014/01 Monday 15 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL GETS GO AHEAD

Local Government Minister, Hilary Armstrong, told the Commons today that Pendle is to receive £490,000 this year as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal initiative, unveiled last October.

Speaking from Westminster, local MP Gordon Prentice, said: “If Pendle fulfils the conditions - and I am confident it will - it will receive £3.9 million over 3 years. The money will be targeted at the most deprived areas of the constituency and aims to reverse their decline and prevent it from recurring.”

Also today the Government announced a new commitment to tackle the problem of "low demand" for housing as part of a package of measures to complement the publication of the Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan.

The £800m Neighbourhood Renewal Fund can provide extra, non-ring fenced money to help local authorities in the most deprived areas spend more on teachers, police officers, crime prevention programmes, social services or any other services which deliver real improvements for the community.

Last October, the Housing Minister, Nick Raynsford, visited Pendle to see for himself the state of much of the housing stock.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 15/01 Wednesday 17 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

JOB OPPORTUNITIES - A FINGERTIP AWAY

A new service designed to help jobseekers has just been introduced at Colne Jobcentre says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. 'Jobpoints' are 'touch screen' kiosks which replace the traditional vacancy display boards. They allow jobseekers to search the national job bank of current vacancies and other employment opportunities.

Colne Jobcentre has been selected as one of 12 pilot sites for Jobpoint and the initial reaction from people looking for work has been very positive.

The MP said: "The Jobpoint lets people browse for jobs at their leisure. Most people are now quite used to using cash machines to get their money out and these kiosks are as straight forward to use."

He continued: "This service is pretty impressive. It allows people to search in other areas of the country for employment and will print out details of any jobs they are interested in. The Jobpoint will even give details of some European and international vacancies. As the old saying goes, the world is at our fingertips."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 016/01 Wednesday 17 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CRIME IN LANCASHIRE DOWN BY A FIFTH SINCE 97

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the latest British Crime Survey figures, published yesterday, which reported a further fall in crime. In Lancashire, crime is down a staggering 21.9% since the last General Election - and down 4.4% in the period September 99 - September 2000.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The fact is, crime is falling and police numbers are rising. Overall recorded crime has fallen by 7% since the election.”

“Police numbers are rising - by 444 in the period March to September 2000, and the past year has seen a 74% increase in police recruits entering training colleges on the previous year.”

“In Lancashire, there were 3,179 police officers in post on 31 March 2000 and this had risen to 3,215 by 30 September 2000 - an increase of 36 officers or 1.13%.”

The MP added: “They show that something can be done about crime. We can make a real difference if we try hard enough.”

Overall recorded crime fell in 26 out of the 43 police force areas in England and Wales. Property offences fell by 1.2%. Drug offences feel by 11%. Sexual offences fell by 0.4% - the first fall for 5 years.

Note to Editors: Police numbers are up: at the end of September 2000 were 124,614. This is an increase of 444 compared with 31 March 2000.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 017/01 Wednesday 17 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENALTIES FOR CONTRAVENING FOOD SAFETY LEGISLATION NEED DRASTIC OVERHAUL says MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for an immediate review of the adequacy of the penalties for breaking the food safety laws. Last week he urged Ministers to make a Commons statement on the rotten poultry case, reported last month, where five men were convicted at Hull Crown Court for their part in a nationwide fraud to pass off adulterated and contaminated meat as fit for human consumption.

The MP was shocked to learn today from Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke that only two people convicted of flouting the food safety laws have been sentenced to imprisonment, one for three months and one for four months.

Charles Clarke told the MP: “Section 8 of the Food Safety Act 1990 refers to the sale of food not complying with food safety requirements. This includes selling food that is unfit for human consumption.”

The Minister continued: “However the data held centrally on the Home Office's Court Proceedings Database, which only identify offences under s8 of the Act from 1992, do not distinguish the particular offence of selling food that is unfit for human consumption from the other offences given under this section of the Act. There may also be prosecutions under the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995, but we are again unable to identify specific offences.

“Only two offenders were sentenced to imprisonment, one for three months and one for four months.”

more follows

FOOD SAFETY LEGISLATION

In a separate statement, Health Minister Gisela Stuart told the MP today: “Putting condemned meat in the human food chain is a very serious matter and one that could affect human health.”

“The charge in this case was one of unusually serious criminal activity involving food safety, based on an intention to defraud others for financial gain. The fresh meat sector is one of the most strictly regulated sectors of the food industry. Penalties tinder the Food Safety Act 1990 reflect the nature of the regulatory offences generally prosecuted under it. In this case, the appropriate charge was a common law conspiracy to defraud, where the penalties available are greater than those under specific food legislation. If the, law needs strengthening to ensure better protection of human health, we will not hesitate to do this.”

The MP, whose Commons motion on food safety (EDM 162) has the backing of fifty MPs, pressed Health Ministers to look again at the issue.

Note to Editors: The MP’s Commons Motion reads: “This House endorses the view of Judge Peter Heppell QC who reportedly told the Crown Court in Hull in December 2000 that a review of the penalties for contravening the Food Safety Act should be put in train; considers the sentences available to the Court in cases where adulterated and rotten meat destined for the petfood market ends up in food for humans, are totally inadequate; and calls on the Government to act swiftly to increase the powers available to the courts, and to restore confidence in the food industry.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 018/01 Thursday 18 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP VOTES FOR BAN ON HUNTING WITH DOGS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, last night voted in the Commons to ban hunting with dogs. The Hunting Bill now goes into Standing Committee where it will be scrutinised line by line. The MP is a member of the Committee. His speech (edited) is set out below.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: I have only a few points to make because we have debated this issue to death. We have been around the course so many times that the arguments are extremely familiar. I support option 3--a total ban--and reject the other two options. Some people say that a total ban is unenforceable. The right hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) entered the Chamber a few moments ago, but then disappeared. As he is a former Home Office Minister whose e-mail has been plastered across the newspapers over recent days, I am disappointed that he is not listening to the debate.

I tried to intervene on the former Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), but unfortunately he would not allow me to do so. I wanted to ask him whether it is right for a former Home Office Minister to make the statement published in The Observer on 14 January. The right hon. Member for Penrith and The Border stated: "I think the banning option is impossible to enforce, and once we stir up the police about its weakness they will be terrified of trying to implement it." Can hon. Members believe that?

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough): The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to learn that I tend to agree with the consequence of what he says. This weekend, the master of a hunt told me that hunts are big business; it costs £50,000 a year to run them. Once the ban comes into effect--if it does--hunts will not be able to survive in some underground way; 18 in 20 hounds will have to be put down, as well as some of the horses. The hon. Gentleman is right. There will not be massive civil disobedience and the hunts will vanish. Of course, I regret that, he may not.

Mr. Prentice: We hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I am making the point that it is inappropriate for a former Home Office Minister to talk about stirring up the police so that they are terrified of implementing the law. Let me tell the putative law breakers on the Opposition Benches that, when the Bill has become an Act, they must take the consequences if they or those who support them break the law.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman is most generous in giving way. As I said earlier, every weekend in the east of England, people go hare coursing illegally. The police tell me that it is too difficult to control. He and I care about the fact that the brown

HUNTING WITH DOGS - 2

hare population is declining, and brown hares survive where regulated, legal hare coursing takes place. Where hare shoots and illegal coursing take place, they are being wiped out, and farmers and landowners are being intimidated into the bargain.

Mr. Prentice: I take the point, but all I would say is that the Home Office has been in touch with the Association of Chief Police Officers to find out whether there would be any particular difficulties about enforcing such a Bill if it were to reach the statute book. The Minister will want to comment on this in winding up the debate, but I understand that the chief police officers do not envisage any unusual, particular problems in enforcing the

proposal if it becomes law, as I am sure it will. On the spring hare population in the east of England, it is up to the police to do what we pay them to do--enforce the law.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: As the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) said, ACPO's view is that much the same resources are likely to be involved in enforcing any of the schedules, because substantial resources are currently involved in ensuring that hunts can take place and in dealing with protests and the other issues associated with hunts. The other two schedules may involve resource issues.

Mr. Prentice: A survey has been conducted on how much police forces spend on policing the hunts. We have replies from about half the police forces in England. The average annual sum is about £500,000, so police forces already spend considerable amounts on such policing.

I do not want to labour this point, but it is important because Opposition Members talk about the criminalisation of law-abiding people. When the Bill goes on to the statute book, it will not involve criminalising law-abiding people, but taking action against law breakers. People outside the House do not make the law. We are elected to make the law and, if people reject our views, they can vote us out. The members of the Pendle Forest and Craven hunt, which is based in my constituency, can vote me out; they can put up a candidate if they like, and they can circulate leaflets. I am happy to have that debate because I am convinced that my views would prevail if we were to do so.

Mr. Baker: For the record, I tell the hon. Gentleman that I wrote to each chief constable to ask the cost of policing hunts in the year 1999-2000. About a third of the forces replied, and the total for each was £542,854--not an insubstantial sum.

Mr. Prentice: The House will be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for supplying that information. This debate is not about the slippery slope, angling, shooting, insects--astonishingly, we heard about mosquitoes earlier--birds, the whale population or all the sentient creatures in God's universe, but about what is in the Bill. All the other tactics are merely diversionary and intended to take us off the main argument.

Mr. Öpik: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prentice: I must make a little progress, but I will give way because I am interested to hear the exponent of the third way--[Interruption]--the middle way. That was a Freudian slip, because I was about to refer to the main exponent of the third way--the Prime Minister. I am a great fan of the Prime Minister, and all Labour Members breathed a huge, collective sigh of relief when he stuck to his principled position, which he set out two years ago, and did not move because he is a man of

principle. That should encourage hon. Members on both sides of the House to vote for option 3.

I like being candid--not unkind, but just candid--so I have to say that I was disappointed in my good friend and constituency near neighbour, the Home Secretary. I withdrew my amendment to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, because the Government promised to introduce their own legislation, and, in the euphoria, I referred to the Home Secretary as a hero. That heroic phase was just a passing one, but I still like him and we get on well together. However, the middle way, which the Home Secretary supports, is chasing moonbeams.

I am a student of the third way and of the middle way, and it is amazing that after two and a half years' cogitation, trying to square the circle, the middle way did not have an answer on hare coursing. What did the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Mr. Öpik) say a few moments ago? I jotted it down, because that is the sort of person I am. He said that we still have some way to go. Can hon. Members believe that hare coursing is still work in progress?

At least the hon. Member for South-East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Paice) came up with some sort of solution. I paraphrase him, but he suggested that hare coursing should be allowed in those parts of the country where there are hares and banned where there are none. The middle way may be short of money but it is not short of intelligence, so why cannot it find a solution?

Mr. Öpik: I find that attack extraordinary. I have already made it clear to the hon. Member for Brigg and Goole (Mr. Cawsey)--I sometimes like to think that he is also my friend--that we have tried to take an honest approach throughout, and I said that there had been division and concern about hare coursing in the Middle Way Group. Furthermore, does the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) not remember that I gave him credit for causing us to focus on that issue? If he continues to lambast us simply for trying to have an honest and open discussion, having taken a tentative position on our schedule, I shall be disappointed because I thought he would be more generous than that.

Mr. Prentice: This is really touchy-feely politics. We all like the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Mr. Öpik). We get on well together, but when I posed a simple, direct question--

Mr. Öpik rose--

Mr. Prentice: Hang on a minute. I asked what practical difference the middle way regime on the regulation of hare coursing would make.

Mr. Öpik rose--

Mr. Prentice: I will not allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene. The answer was that he still had some way to go before working out a position. He must stop pointing to the Bill; we have all read it and we know what it says. The Burns report said that hare coursing was "essentially carried out for recreational purposes".

As I said, the little hares that hop about do not eat meat or harm anyone, but the hare is a threatened creature. The Conservative party introduced the biodiversity action plan, which included a target. I thought that Labour Members had fixations about targets, but the plan included a target for the little spring hare, jumping about. It was that the spring hare population should double by 2010. We are thus supposed to be

doubling the hare population, but at the same time some hon. Members condone the killing of hares--which are not pests or vermin--for fun. That usually excites a response from the Conservatives, but let me say it again--for fun.

We are talking about killing for sporting or recreational purposes, and that is not on. Why am I voting for option 3? I am voting for option 3 because hunting is cruel. That is not a difficult concept to grasp. Some people, including eminent people such as scientists, say that it is not cruel. The Times published a letter on 20 December last year which many of my colleagues will have read. It was written by Dr. L. H. Thomas of Smiths Cottage, North Heath, Chieveley who is the secretary of Vets for Hunting, a group that I did not know existed. He said: "For 90 per cent. or more of any hunt-- in this case, a fox hunt-- they-- the foxes-- are not fleeing in terror of their lives, but rather are responding in a remarkably controlled manner to an entirely natural, albeit adverse stimulus. It is only in the short final stages of the hunt that the quarry comes under any serious stress and that no more, in physiological terms, than the extended athlete or racehorse."

There we have it. He went on to say: "There is" -- I do not know how these scientists divine such information-- "no apparent premonition of death." Can hon. Members believe that?

The hon. Member for South-East Cambridgeshire said that it would be wrong for us to bestow human traits on animals. We are not doing that. I am concerned about what we as humans do to animals. I believe that we should treat animals with respect, but I do not think that they are prototype humans. The Burns report, which we have all read, concludes that there are more humane alternatives. Shooting foxes--lamping--has not been dreamed up by the League Against Cruel Sports. It was official Government policy when the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) was Minister of Agriculture and running the show at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The official line was that if there was a problem with the fox population, the fox was shot. That is also my view.

We hear much from self-appointed people who speak for country men and women. Apparently, no Labour Member speaks for them; it is something that the Conservatives do. The hon. Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Townend), in a most astonishingly racist speech, gave the impression that he and people like him speak for country people. Well, they do not. I represent a constituency with a large rural collar and speak for many country people. I do not, however, take it upon myself to stand here and say, "I speak on behalf of everyone in the countryside", because I do not. I speak for people who share my point of view, as many people in the countryside do.

The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) spoke about the abolition of the hunt changing the face of agriculture. I allowed myself a wry smile, because the hon. Gentleman--and I like him too--was an Agriculture Minister in the previous Government. That Administration changed the face of agriculture--not irreversibly, we hope--by advocating the common agricultural policy and intensive agriculture. During the Conservatives' stewardship, 158,000 km of hedgerows were ripped out; yet they come here and lecture us, and people outside the House, that they are the guardians of the countryside, but they are not.

We will all vote according to our own lights. I believe that hunting's time has gone; it has passed. When we ban hunting, people will just have to pick themselves up, dust themselves down and get on with their lives. Vote for option 3.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 019/01 Thursday 18 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FOREST INN HOTEL PLAN 'CALLED IN' BY MINISTERS

A planning application to build a new 66 bed hotel with conference facilities, leisure centre and car parking at the Forest Inn at Cuckstool Lane, Fence has been "called in" by Ministers at the Department of the Environment who will make the decision.

In a letter to local MP, Gordon Prentice, dated 17 January, the Housing and Planning Minister, Nick Raynesford, said the Secretary of Sate had decided to call-in this planning application "because of its possible implications for Green Belt policy as well as its conflict with other national policies in terms of its location and public transportation".

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "It is clearly appropriate that planning applications for new developments which encroach on to the Green Belt should be determined by Ministers."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 020/01 Monday 22 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOVERNMENT TO LISTEN TO NIGHT NOISE PROBLEMS

The Government is to look again at ways of tackling the problem of night noise says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP has campaigned for years for a drastic tightening up of the law to deter people whose noisy behaviour makes their neighbours' lives a misery.

Environment Minister, Keith Hill, told the MP today the Government was reviewing the operation of the Noise Act 1996 to establish whether it is effective or not. Ministers also want to look at good practice to see where local authorities can learn from each other.

The Night Noise offence was intended to provide a swift remedy to problems of disturbance caused by noise from dwellings at night. However, whilst a review commissioned by the Government and carried out by the University of Birmingham found that 90% of councils responding now operate some form of out of hours service - compared with 52% in 1994 - only 13 authorities have formally adopted the Night Noise Offence.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I know that Pendle Council is looking at this issue afresh. I shall be interested to see their response to this latest Government initiative. Noise is a big issue. It can drive people up the wall."

The closing date for comments is 31 March 2001.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 021/01 Monday 21 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR BOOST IN PENSIONS OF WOMEN PRIESTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for an increase in pensions for women priests of the Church of England, saying they were denied access to the top jobs of archbishop and bishop - no matter how holy they may be.

Quizzing Stuart Bell MP - who speaks for the Church Commissioners in the House of Commons - the Pendle MP said there was a "concrete" rather than glass ceiling holding women down and this should be compensated for by boosting the non contributory pension paid to women priests.

The MP told the House that the entitlement to a full pension was dependent on a 37 year stint as a cleric and that many women would have broken work records.

Stuart Bell told the Pendle MP that an Archbishop's review group was looking at the whole issue.

Speaking after the exchange, the Pendle MP said: "The Church of England is the established church which is why we have these rather quirky ecclesiastical question times in the Commons. But we touch on real issues. The pension is linked to the stipend which is itself below average earnings.

The problem of priestly poverty in retirement is a real one. They can't live on fresh air.

The Pendle MP takes a close interest in Church of England matters.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 022/01 Monday 21 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TOLD: LIBRARY BOOKS ARE NOT THROWN OUT

Books from the collection of the British Library are not thrown out as had been feared by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

In Culture Questions in the Commons this afternoon, the Pendle MP tackled Culture Minister, Alan Howarth, about allegations, made last year, that 80,000 books had been thrown out by the British Library to create more space for new acquisitions. He claimed the books had been weeded out by junior staff.

The Minister told the MP: "The Library has never discarded books and has no plans to do so now." Prentice said this news was "immensely reassuring" but countered by quoting a statement by a British Library spokesperson, which appeared in an article in the Guardian on 11 August 2000, who said books "were being discarded all the time".

Speaking afterwards, Prentice said: "There are rumours that 10% of the national newspaper collection at Colindale is to be sold or destroyed after it has been put on micro fiche. I want a similar assurance from Ministers that our old national and regional newspapers are safe."

The MP added: “In a hundred years time I want people to be able to pick up a yellowing copy of the Barlick and Earby Times, the Craven Herald and the Lancashire Evening Telegraph and wonder at the way we lived our lives. Our regional papers tell a story.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 023/01 Monday 22 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BIG CASH BOOST FOR PENDLE FAMILIES

New figures show 1,980 local families better off due to the Working Families Tax Credit says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP revealed the latest official figures and pledged the Government would reinforce it in April with the new Children’s Tax Credit designed to help families throughout Britain.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The new figures are encouraging but there are clearly more families in Pendle entitled to the WFTC which means they may be missing an average £77 per week.”

Working families with children should call the WFTC Free infoline on 0800 597 5976.

The MP added: "The WFTC is central to the Government’s strategy to make work pay and to tackle child poverty. It is worth an average of £30 more than the old family credit and is reaching 300,000 more families with half a million children.”

“Taking into account all the new tax and benefit changes, including the new Children's Tax Credit from April, families with children will be on average £850 a year better off than they were in 1997.”

Note to Editors: How does WFTC help working families?
The Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) is a central part of the Government’s drive to make work pay and tackle child poverty. It was launched in October 1999, Over 1.1 million families are now receiving WFTC - 300,000 more than Family Credit which it replaced.

more follows

BIG CASH BOOST FOR PENDLE FAMILIES

By cutting tax bills WFTC ensures an income of at least £208 a week for full time work (£214 from April). And it means that there is no net income tax to pay until family income reaches £245 a week (£255 from this April).

WFTC also includes a generous childcare tax credit component. This pays up to 70% of eligible childcare costs up to a maximum of £100 per week for families with one child and £150 for families with two or more children- Over 100,00 families are benefiting from this extra help with childcare costs.

WFTC pays out £5 billion a year in help to working families.

The WFTC is central to the Government's modernisation of the tax and benefit system to remove the barriers created by the unemployment and poverty traps and improve rewards from work. The WFTC is reinforced by other reforms introduced to support working families, These include the minimum wage, the 10p starting rate of income tax, increases in child benefit, the new Children's Tax Credit and raising the starting threshold for NIC contributions. Taken together the reforms made during this Parliament will mean that the direct tax burden on a typical family (single earner family with two children on average earnings) is at its lowest level since 1972.

How does WFTC work ?

To be eligible one parent must work 16 hours or more a week, be responsible for at least one dependent child or young person and have savings of £8000 or less. The amount of WFTC available is dependent on circumstances - ie. income, number of hours worked each week, number and ages of children, savings, and childcare costs.

WFTC has four parts:

* A basic tax credit - £53.15
* A 30 hour credit (working over 30 hours) - £11.25
* A tax credit for each child -
  Age: 0 to 15 - £25.60
  Age: 16 to 18 - £26.35

* The childcare credit - up to 70% of eligible costs up to maximum costs of £100 for one child and £150 two or more children.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 024/01 Tuesday 23 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR HELP FOR THE HERMIT KINGDOM

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged the Government to help North Korea whose 20 million people have been fighting to stave off hunger and starvation following repeated harvest failures.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP - who is a long standing member of the Parliamentary All Party Korea Group - told Foreign Office Minister, John Battle, that two million North Koreans have starved to death as a result of famine.

The MP congratulated the Government on its ground breaking move, establishing diplomatic relations with the country last month. He told the Minister: "North Korea - the so called hermit kingdom - has been isolated for half a century and is only now emerging into the daylight. I hope we will do all we can to help the North Koreans to feed themselves."

The MP told the House that he would be meeting a delegation of North Koreans next week to discuss the situation in the country.

After the exchange, the MP said: "North Korea is a country frozen in time. A Stalinist state long after the others had crumbled. We now have to bring North Korea into the wider community of nations. I want to establish trading links soon."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 025/01 Wednesday 24 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE GETS DOUBLE HELPING OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL CASH THIS YEAR

Pendle is to get double the money promised this year under the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal initiative designed to improve core services in its most deprived areas. Pendle will be getting £980,000 to be spent from 1 April this year - twice the allocation previously announced. The news was immediately hailed by local MP, Gordon Prentice, as a "real tonic for the area".

An additional £100 million is to be shared among the 88 local authorities in the most deprived areas of the country to help them make a good start to meet the ambitious targets set out in the Action Plan for Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy published last week. Pendle is one of the 88. Local Authorities in the North West are to receive nearly a quarter of the total national allocation.

The cash boost, announced today by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, will be available from April 2001 and distributed through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF).

The John Prescott told the Pendle MP: "£800 million is already available over the next three years through- the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to help the authorities in the most deprived areas, and therefore under the most pressures, to begin to make progress raising standards in core services. This complements the major increase in investment in public services announced in the spending review."

"We published our Action Plan on Neighbourhood Renewal last week. Our aim is that within 10-20 years no one is disadvantaged because of where they live. We all want to see fast and effective

more follows

PENDLE GETS DOUBLE HELPING OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL CASH THIS YEAR

progress on this."

Commenting on the cash boost, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "This is great news. It is money Pendle needs and it will be up to local people to decide the spending priorities."

Pendle has been promised £3.9m from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund over the next three years.

Note to Editors: Funding is dependent on the setting up of a Local Strategic Partnership which must agree a local neighbourhood renewal strategy which will tackle deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Pendle Council is already doing this.

The National Strategy is targeted at the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the country: the vast majority of these are located within the 88 local authority districts eligible for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). Local authorities will have to demonstrate that they are already working effectively with a Local Strategic Partnership in order to receive their allocation from the NRF in years 2 and 3.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 026/01 Monday 29 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SLIGHT RISE IN PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle in December and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,216 - up from 1,099 in November. This represents an unemployment rate of 3.5%. There were 918 men and 298 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count fell by 2,600 on the September figure and now stands at 1,040,000. Employment now stands at nearly 27,980,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Pendle jobless figures have risen slightly this month. The closure of the West Marton Creamery at the end of last month will also have an affect on the figures for January. Howevere, nationally the most up-to-date- figures show the labour market continuing to improve, with claimant unemployment falling and increasing job vacancices. We now have the lowest number of benefit claimants for more than 21 years."

The MP continued: "We have seen some fluctuating figures for the autumn months, but employment has grown by well over 200,000 over the last year."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 041/01 Wednesday 31 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO MEET EDUCATION CHIEFS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet the Chair of Lancashire Education Authority, Hazel Harding, this Friday at County Hall, Preston.

The meeting follows today's Commons statement on local government finance which will increase spending nationwide by £3 billion. Investment in education is up £1.9 billion (8.7%).

Ring fenced grants for education and social services in Lancashire will go up from £51,120,000 in 2000/1 to £62,770,000 in 2001/2 - an increase of £11,650,000 or 22.8%. These funds are specifically earmarked for education and social services and cannot be used for other purposes.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: Education is a top priority for this Government - but it's a team effort. To deliver the best results, we've got to work closely with teachers and education professionals at the chalk face."

"Although there are day to day concerns to be addressed, I also want to look at the longer term. For example, over the next few years the Government wants to devolve even more spending decisions to schools and I want to hear from the County's education chiefs how feasible they think this is."

The meeting is the latest in a regular series.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 043/01 Wednesday 31 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SLAMS "PEOPLE'S PEERS" AND CALLS FOR RETHINK ON HOUSE OF LORDS REFORM

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, renewed his call yesterday for a re-think on the Government's plans for the reform of the House of Lords.

Quizzing Privy Council Minister, Paddy Tipping, on the number of people applying to become a "people's peer", the MP was told 3,141 completed application forms had been returned.

Prentice responded: “Of that number only eight “outstanding individuals” - in the words of the Appointments Commission - will be selected in the next eight weeks and given ermine. Is it not the case that those eight so-called people’s peers can never be representative of Britain? We are creating a legislative joke. Isn’t it possible, even at this late stage, to join forces with the Liberal Democrats and some Conservative members to create a legislature that is fit for the 21st century so that we do not persist with this Gormenghast creation?”

The Minister replied: “I am confident the new procedure will create an Upper House that is more balanced and representative of the community in which we live.”

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: “Fat chance. The new set up is bizarre. Membership of the legislature should be decided by election - not by selection. I want a small, elected House of Lords with around 100 members. That is more than enough.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 029/01 Wednesday 31 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR EARBY WORKERS HIT BY PENSION SHOCK

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has thrown his weight behind efforts to rescue the pensions of workers at Earby Light Engineering - many of whom stand to lose money they paid into the pension fund over the years.

Speaking from Westminster today, the MP said: “This is a very complex situation but the bottom line is crystal clear. Many workers at ELE who, in good faith, paid into their pension fund now find they are likely to lose some, if not all, of their money. It is a shockingly unjust state of affairs.”

The MP has been in touch with MSF - the Union representing the Earby workers - whose Pensions Officer, Bryan Freake, admitted:
“The whole Earby situation is most unfortunate with the deferred members facing substantial cuts in their prospective pensions.”

He went on: “The 'B' fund situation is certainly perverse and the trustees move to incorporate the B funds assets into the 'A' fund is really akin to AVC funds being thrown into the general pot. It does not seem fair to anyone, even to those A fund members, who not being members of the B Fund, stand to benefit marginally from it.”

The MP said: “The Union tells me they believe the trustees have legal advice which they feel obliges them to incorporate the B Fund. However, they go on to say there may be scope for a challenge to this, perhaps via the Ombudsman. I agree. They should certainly do this.”

The MP added: “Pensions law is a minefield. What happens is

more follows

determined by the rules of the scheme as interpreted by the trustees who, themselves, owe a duty to act in the best interests of the people in the fund.”

“It seems clear the trustees would have taken legal advice and would be guided by it. But if this produces injustice then we must challenge it.”

“I hope the ombudsman may be able to provide a remedy. I shall certainly be doing everything I can to help.”

Note to Editors: An MSF Official was present at the meeting with trustee advisers, Hogg Robinson, at the Albion Hall, Earby on the 23 January and is preparing a report

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 030/01 Wednesday 31 January 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

RECEIVERS SAY NO BUYERS FOR WEST MARTON DAIRY

Receivers called in to sell the West Marton Dairy - just outside the Pendle constituency of local MP, Gordon Prentice, have told him there were no buyers to step in to save the ailing business.

The receivers, chartered accountants BDO Stoy Hayward, told the MP every effort was made to sell the business as a going concern, which included placing the advert in the Financial Times. They say 50 parties expressed an interest but this did not translate into a sale. Separate sites at Stourbridge and Hereford, which are mainly processing/distribution operations have been sold.

Earlier this month, the MP expressed dismay at the loss of around 120 jobs at the dairy announced on the last working day before Christmas. Many of the dairy workers live in West Craven.

The redundancies were made following the decision by receivers BDO Stoy Hayward, to close the dairy after failing to sell the parent company, British Creameries. The plight of British Creameries was blamed on significant financial losses over the last year.

The following statement was made by the receivers following the closure of the West Marton site:

- "Following the appointment on 22 November 2000 of the Joint Administrative Receivers the business and assets of the British Creameries Group were advertised for sale in The Financial Times.

- Although a great deal of interest was expressed in the entire

more follows

business (including the three sites at West Marton, Stourbridge and Hereford) only two parties actually indicated that they might be prepared to acquire the West Marton site. One of these parties were not prepared to put their offer in writing and subsequently withdrew from discussions. The other party could not raise the necessary finance to proceed.

- It is not absolutely clear why the entire business way not saleable, although interested parties have expressed doubts about the company viability in view of their significant losses (in excess of £2m) incurred during the last year

- As a sale of the entire business was not possible it regrettably became necessary for the Receivers to close the West Marton site, resulting in a number of redundancies. Working closely with Van Den Bergh Foods Limited (who sold the West Morton operation to the British Creameries Group during 1999) employees will be assisted to maximise any redundancy payments".

The MP said: “The closure of the dairy is a big blow. I wanted to see the company being sold as a going concern. But despite all the expressions of interest, no sale materialised.”

The MP has raised the issue of the dairy closure with the Agriculture Secretary, Nick Brown.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 031/01 Wednesday 7 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

HIGH VISIBILITY IS THE KEY SAYS MP

People need to see the police out and about says local MP, Gordon Prentice. High visibilty policing is the key to dealing with many of the problems facing the area and if people are to feel safe in their neighbourhoods. The MP was speaking in Westminster in advance of a briefing from Inspector Richard Morgan on Friday 9 February at Colne Police Station.

The MP recently spoke to Horsfield residents who expressed concern about anti-social behaviour in the area. The police were also present at the meeting and the MP is again to hear how they will be following things up.

The meeting comes shortly after the latest British Crime Survey figures which reports a further fall in crime. In Lancashire, crime is down a staggering 21.9% since the last General Election - and down 4.4% in the period September 99 to September 2000.

The MP said last month: “The fact is, crime is falling and police numbers are rising. Overall recorded crime has fallen by 7% since the 1997.”

Police numbers are rising. In Lancashire there were 3,179 police officers in post on 31 March 2000 and this had risen to 3,215 by 30 September 2000 - an increase of 36 officers or 1.13%.

The MP concluded: “We can make a real difference if we try hard enough. Trouble spots can be targeted and working with local groups such as Pendle Safety Partnership can be very effective.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 032/01 Wednesday 7 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be dropping in at the Open Door Centre in Colne this Friday, 9 February. The MP will be talking to the people involved there about ways and means of funding projects. The scheme is run by Colne Churches Together and is principally a drop-in and welfare centre. Other organisations such as the Princes Trust, Marriage Care and the Lighthouse Pregnancy Crisis Project have all used the centre. The project also provides food, clothing and furniture for people in need.

The MP said: “Colne Open Door Centre performs a splendid service for the local community. They will be opening new premises for a furniture recycling centre shortly and I will be keen to see what other projects they have come up with since my last visit in November 1999.”

“As well as having a drop-in cafe, the Project provides food, clothing and furniture for people in need. I am looking forward to meeting the staff at the centre and seeing for myself the work they do.”

He continued: “I will also be discussing with the staff the whole subject of funding and grants and how the rather complicated system of applying for money could be simplified.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 033/01 Wednesday 7 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

THE CHILDREN’S FUND

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed the news that Lancashire has been chosen as one of 40 areas in England to be invited to apply for the first wave of funding for cash from the new ‘Children’s Fund.’

The Fund will target 5-13 year olds at risk of social exclusion, bridging the gap between Sure Start for pre-school children and the new Connexions Service for the over 13s (see below). Those providing services for children and young people want to offer more help, at an early stage, not just when families reach a crisis. This fund will help support that goal.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said; “Lancashire has passed the first hurdle for funding. I have written to the Chief Executive of Lancashire County Council urging him to take the next step to put in a bid for the Children’s Fund.”

The MP added: “£380 million is available over three years to fund services to prevent children and their families suffering the consequences of poverty. The 40 areas across England, which have been invited to participate in the first wave of the fund, include

those with the highest levels of need and disadvantage amongst children and young people along with some areas of particular disadvantage associated with rural areas."

Notes to Editor: 1. Connexions is a new Service, at the heart of the Government's wider Connexions Strategy aimed at increasing the participation and achievement of all young people. The Connexions Service will provide information, advice and guidance for all young people 13 to 19 to help them make the most of their educational and vocational choices and development opportunities during their teenage years and prepare for successful transition to work and adult responsibilities. The Service will be provided to young people via a range of means, including a network of personal advisers who will give advice and guidance, broker access to specialised support and , in some instances, provide personal development opportunities.

more follows.....

THE CHILDREN'S FUND

2. The Sure Start scheme for pre-school children is already up and running in the Bradley and Whitefield wards of Nelson. A total of £1,677,254 over the next three years will be used to help the wards' 750 children under four get a good start in life.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0171 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 035/01 Monday 12 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL NHS GETS FURTHER £1.6m CASH INJECTION

Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, has told Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, that the East Lancashire Health Authority is to get record funding in the coming 2001/2 financial year. An extra £1.6 million will boost the total allocation to the local NHS to £417m - an increase of 9.03%.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "We all know the Health Service can never get too much money. But the Government is doing its very best to make sure it gets the resources it needs. This year's increase is huge. It is just what the doctor ordered."

Note to Editors: The Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: "I am today making two further allocations of cash to support implementation of the NHS Plan.

NHS staff are working hard to deliver the priorities for reform set out in the NHS Plan we published in July 2000. We are making real progress across the country, which I know will also be the case in your local health authority.

I wrote to you last November with details of health authority allocations for 2001/02. I have now reviewed the scope for providing more cash to the NHS locally and have identified a further £140m to support the implementation of the NHS Plan. The average increase in health authority allocations for 2001/02 will now rise to 8.9%.

I am pleased to tell you that in East Lancashire Health Authority the additional funding is £1.6 million. This brings the total allocation for 2001/02 to £417 million an increase of 9.03% on 2000/01. This represents an increased investment in the NHS in your local area.

more follows

LOCAL NHS GETS FURTHER £1.6m CASH INJECTION

Progress is also being made in the expansion of heart surgery capacity, In August I announced an allocation of £10 million to ensure existing cardiac centres were able to undertake more activity. To make further progress I am today allocating a further £7.7m to increase the number of cardiac operations for the remainder of 2000/01.

This funding is being allocated to health authorities with specialist cardiac centres. Each centre generally receives patients from other health authorities and regions. This additional activity will benefit patients across the country.

'The NHS Plan is about investment and reform. To accompany these extra resources we expect to see real improvements in the care patients receive. I know that commitment is shared by the doctors, nurses, therapists and other excellent staff who work in the NHS.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 036/01 Tuesday 13 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CUTS THE RIBBON AT COATES LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be officially opening the new staffroom, computer suite and washroom facilities at Coates Lane Primary School in Barnoldswick this Friday (16 February) at 3.30pm. As well as performing the opening ceremony the MP will be speaking to parents and children at a special assembly. The school has regained the Government Charter Mark for excellence in public service after achieving the award for the first time two years ago. As a result the school intends to erect two flagpoles to advertise its achievement and its 'Investors in People' status.

Last April Lancashire County Council decided to spend £23,000 to refurbish and extend the toilets at Coates Lane Primary School in Barnoldswick - the town where the MP lives.

In a letter at the time to the Chair of Governors, Mrs Oldfield, the MP said he was delighted that the work was to be carried out. She had earlier thanked him for his support in getting the toilets regarded as a priority.

The MP said: "I am very much looking forward to the ceremony on Friday. Coates Lane is a splendid school and the staff and Governors have been pressing for these improvements for some time."

"The environment in which learning takes place is very important and that is why the Government is determined to tackle the decades of neglect which has left us with a huge backlog of repairs and improvements which have to be carried out."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0207 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 037/01 Tuesday 13 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

DEBT OF HONOUR NOW REPAID says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said hello again to some of the country's old soldiers at the Royal British Legion's Parliamentary Open Day in the Palace of Westminster today (Tuesday 13 February) as £10,000 gratuities were being paid to Far East PoWs.

The MP said: "I met Lancashire County Field Officer, Robert Ellis, and others from the British Legion. I have met Robert many times at the Remembrance Day parade in Colne when we reflect on the enormous debt we owe to those who fought and died defending our country and its freedoms."

The Pendle MP discussed issues of current concern with Bob Ellis including Gulf Syndrome and depleted uranium.

The Royal British Legion will also be able to give themselves a pat on the back following the successful campaign for a Government ex-gratia payment for the former PoWs of the Japanese and their widows. All British service personnel who survived their time as Far East PoWs, whether members of the Armed Forces, merchant seamen or civilians, or their surviving spouses, are receiving an ex-gratia payment of £10,000. The cheques went out on 1 February 2001.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, described the announcement, made last November, as marvellous news. The Pendle MP had lobbied hard on the issue following representations from his local branch of the Royal British Legion. In 1999 he was in touch with the Prime Minister to argue the case for compensation after he had been approached by Field Officer, Bob Ellis. Mr Ellis told the MP of the very strong feelings about the issue in the Pendle branches of the British Legion.

Every year the MP remembers the fallen at Remembrance Day parades and services in Nelson, Colne and Barnoldswick. 1968 is the only year this century when no British serviceman or woman was killed on duty.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0207 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 038/01 Wednesday 14 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE JOBLESS

The number of people out of work in Pendle in January and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,453 - up from 1,216 in December 2000. This represents an unemployment rate of 4.2%. There were 1,089 men and 364 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count has fallen steeply and now stands at 1,004,800 - the lowest rate for 25 years. Employment now stands at nearly 27,990,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Pendle jobless figures have risen this month. The closure of the West Marton Creamery at the end of last year will have affected the figures for January. However, nationally the most up-to-date figures show a big fall in the number of claimants and, after some fluctuating figures in the autumn months, the improvement of the labour market seems to be back on track."

The MP continued: "The announcement from the Government of £250 million grant for Rolls Royce is good news but cash on this scale must be tied to a UK jobs guarantee."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0207 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 039/01 Wednesday 14 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP BACKS CONTINUED ROLE FOR HEALTH WATCHDOG

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, told members of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Community Health Council that he would be voting in the House of Commons this evening to retain an independent voice for patients despite Government plans to sweep away the CHCs.

At Westminster this afternoon, the MP told the Chair of the CHC, Frank Clifford, and the 14 strong deputation from East Lancashire that he hoped the Government would listen to the grass roots and pull back from its plan to abolish the CHCs.

The MP predicted that the Government would at the eleventh hour back an amendment to the Health and Social Care Bill tabled by Wakefield MP, David Hinchcliffe, who chairs the Commons Health Select Committee. It would have the effect of retaining an independent voice for patients - the CHC in all but name.

Speaking after the meeting - and before the vote - the MP said: “The Government has alienated many people who were its staunchest advocates. I simply don’t know why they embarked on this issue.”

The MP added: “Under this Government, we are seeing a huge increase in health spreading nationally and locally in East Lancashire. That is the message we should be proclaiming.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 040/01 Monday 19 February 2001

CARE HOMES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting representatives of the North East Lancashire Community and Care Homes Association this evening at the Inn on the Wharf, Burnley to discuss pressures facing the sector. He will be joined by Burnley MP, Peter Pike.

The meeting follows publicity last month that another residential home in East Lancashire was closing. The association contacted local MPs in a bid to alert them to the "plight of the caring profession".

Lancashire County Council has been meeting representatives of the Lancashire Care Association to discuss the residential and nursing home market in the county. The Social Services Department currently purchases services from 450 residential and nursing homes in the county and from 100 outside. A background paper on quality standards in homes which is to be considered by councillors on 6 March says the independent sector had developed in an unplanned manner "resulting in a market which does not match need in many geographical and/or service areas."

The Care Home owners are concerned about more stringent accommodation requirements, the increased dependency of residents/patients, financing nurses pay increases and the impact of the National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Directive.

Speaking before the meeting the MP said: "We all want top quality residential and nursing homes for those who need them. But, not unreasonably, people are being encouraged to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. The County Council's strategy is to give people intensive support at home."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 041/01 Tuesday 13 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LETS MAKE EARBY GO! says MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting Earby Development Group, Earby Councillors and Pendle Council Officers this Friday 16 February in the meeting room above the former fire station in Earby at 11.00am.

The discussion will centre around what can be done to promote the town of Earby and specifically the provision of an information shop in Earby. The MP has already met members of the Development Group and is in touch with the Council to see where things stand.

The MP said: "I am keen to see community led initiatives go ahead in Earby which desperately needs some modern facilities. The Earby Development Group have some very interesting ideas and I am doing everything I can to support them."

The Group was formed with a view to making Earby more attractive to both residents and visitors. As a first step they have proposed to use the Council's buildings at Victoria Road as an information shop and culture centre.

The MP continued: "Earby could benefit tremendously from new facilities but these initiatives need financing. The Government has made money available to rejuvenate market towns and rural communities via the Regional Development Agency and I will be pressing Pendle Council to tap into these resources. We can make a real difference if we try hard enough."

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0207 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 042/01 Wednesday 14 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ROLLS ROYCE WINS £250 million GOVERNMENT GRANT TO DEVELOP NEW ENGINE AS MP SEEKS JOB GUARANTEES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to quiz Trade and Industry Secretary, Stephen Byres, in the Commons tomorrow at DTI questions on the huge £250m Government grant to the aero-engine giant, Rolls Royce. The company has a plant in his Pendle constituency which specialises in the manufacture of fan blades.

Government support of £250m in repayable launch investment to Rolls Royce announced yesterday will safeguard more than 7,000 jobs in the UK. The announcement came alongside the publication of the Government's latest competitiveness white paper setting out the challenges ahead for manufacturing industry.

Speaking from Westminster today, the MP said: "This huge injection of cash is great news - for Barnoldswick and for Pendle. But Government cash on this scale must be tied to a UK jobs guarantee. I want to know what conditions are attached to this money. I want to see jobs in Britain - not highly skilled work being transferred overseas."

Rolls Royce has an enormous order book and common-sense would suggest this translates into secure jobs here in the UK. But experience shows that in a globalised world it is very easy, perhaps too easy, for companies to transfer production to cheaper places overseas. So far as I am concerned the high tech, leading edge work has to be done in the UK."

Note to Editors: The following Press Release was issued by Rolls Royce on 13 February: ROLLS-ROYCE TO LAUNCH NEW TRENT ENGINES - Rolls-Royce

more follows

ROLLS ROYCE WINS £250 million GRANT TO DEVELOP NEW ENGINE AS MP SEEKS JOB GUARANTEES

plc, the aerospace, energy and marine group, announced today (13 February 2001) further development of the Trent aero engine family, comprising the Trent 900 for the Airbus Industrie A380 family and the Trent 600 for the Boeing 747X and Longer Range 767-400ER aircraft.

The Trent 900 and 600 are the latest members of the highly successful Trent family of aero engines, based on the unique Rolls-Royce three-shaft design. Thirty customers and operators have ordered more than 1,400 firm and option Trent engines worth more than £12 billion.

John Rose, Chief Executive of Rolls-Royce, said: "The new Trent programme will reinforce the position of Rolls-Royce as a leader in the world civil aviation market, as well as strengthening the company's links with the world's two major airframe manufacturers.

"The programme will provide a further stimulus to technology acquisition and high-technology manufacturing in the UK. It will also sustain over 7,000 jobs within Rolls-Royce and its UK supply chain. "

This programme will involve a number of international and UK industrial partners.

It was also announced today that the UK Government is providing investment of £250 million for the Trent 900 and Trent 600 for which they will receive a commercial return from future engine sales.

The Trent 900 has been selected by Singapore Airlines, Virgin Atlantic and International Lease Finance Corporation for their A380s. The A380's first flight is scheduled for 2004, with entry into service in 2006. The Trent 600, for Boeing, is due to receive engine certification in 2003.

The Trent 900 will have a 116 inch diameter fan and will be certificated at 80,000lb take-off thrust. The initial in-service rating will range from 68,000lb to 75,000lb thrust. The Trent 600 will have a 102 inch diameter fan and will operate at 68,000lb to 72,000lb thrust.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 043/01 Tuesday 20 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP DETERMINED TO LIGHT UP EARBY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has cracked heads together in a bid to rid Earby of out of date street lighting. A damning report on the state of the lights was published at the end of 1999. Now the MP wants to know why Earby people are still being left in the dark as a result of power failures.

The MP said: “People in Earby seem to be having more than their fair share of problems with street lights going out. I have been in touch with both Yorkshire Electricity and Lancashire County Council but it has turned into a game of pass the parcel.”

He continued: “The cabling system is over fifty years old and when a fuse blows it can affect up to twenty street lights. The two organisations that can change matters both appear to be passing the responsibility to the other.”

Lancashire County Council told the MP they consider the so called ‘5th core’ wiring system that Yorkshire Electricity uses is outdated and the company should consider upgrading the street lights. The County Council would be prepared to match this commitment by a direct one-for-one replacement of lighting columns. However, Yorkshire Electricity are reluctant to do this claiming it would be uneconomic.

The MP said: “Someone, somewhere needs to be strung up from a lamp post! I am seeking a meeting with Yorkshire Electricity to break this ludicrous deadlock.”

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0207 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 044/01 Tuesday 20 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES NEIGHBOURHOOD CHILDCARE INITIATIVE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the Government's new 'Neighbourhood Childcare Initiative.' The Department of Education and Employment (DfEE) has plans to create 1.6 million nursery and out of school hours places by 2004 with a focus on closing the gap in the amount of childcare places between the most and least disadvantaged areas across the country. In Lancashire there is a minimum target of 430 nursery places and the county has been allocated £1.8 million for running costs and £763,250 capital funding. Lancashire is getting a further £3.7 million to create 5,785 places for out of school hours children.

The funding will target the 20% most disadvantaged wards across England and the DfEE have identified 10 wards in Pendle in this category. Those are Bradley, Brierfield, Clover Hill, Horsfield, Marsden, Southfield, Vivary Bridge, Walverden, Waterside and Whitefield.

The MP said: "Childcare places are becoming more and more essential to parents who work or are looking to get a job. I am urging the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs), which will oversee the funding, to put a bid in for some cash."

The MP continued: "Over half the wards in Pendle have been identified as disadvantaged and are in the running for this cash. We can help turn this around by giving people with children the opportunity to work by setting up daycare places."

Note to editor: The three strands of the initiative are a) creating 45,000 new day care places in Neighbourhood Nurseries - equivalent to 900, 50-place nurseries. b) providing up to 3 years start-up funding for around 50,000 out of school hours childcare places. c) setting up 25,000 new childminder places in disadvantaged areas.

Contact Gordon Prentice on 07644 005297 and leave message or call 01282 695471 (constituency) or 0207 219 4011 (Commons)

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 045/01 Tuesday 20 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MPs AT ROLLS ROYCE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting the Rolls Royce plant in Barnoldswick tomorrow (Wednesday) along with his Burnley neighbour, Peter Pike MP. The MP's visit comes in the wake of last week's announcement that the Government is to give the company £250m in grant aid to help develop the hugely successful Trent series of engines.

The Pendle MP is a regular visitor to the two sites in Barlick. Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson before the meeting at Rolls, the MP said: "The news of the £250m was splendid but I am interested in the nuts and bolts of the announcement. In particular, the employment opportunities it creates at the Barnoldswick sites."

The MP said: "When I visited Rolls in June last year company had a bulging order book standing at £13.2 billion - the equivalent of about 3 years worth of work. Profits had gone up 11%. At the time the people from the Rolls Royce HQ told me the order book was 'big but fragile'. The Government cash should firm things up."

Note to Editors: Rolls Royce spends about £600 million a year in research and development. The company announced last week that the £250m in repayable launch investment will safeguard more than 7,000 jobs in the UK. In the Commons, the Pendle MP told the Trade and Industry Secretary, Stephen Byres, the cash injection should be tied to a UK jobs guarantee.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 046/01 Wednesday 21 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ELECTION RALLY CALL BY MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be rallying the troops at the Annual General Meeting of Pendle Constituency Labour Party this Friday (23 February) in Nelson as it gears up for the General Election expected on 3 May. The MP joked 'If the election isn't in May I shall eat my hat!'

The MP will highlight the huge amount of investment coming into Pendle. Since 1997 the area has successfully won money in three separate consecutive bids from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). SRB Round 4 'Pendle Youth Focus - Kick Start for jobs received £2.6 million, SRB Round 5 'Opening Doors, Unlocking Opportunities' received £16 million and SRB Round 6 'The Time is Now' got £16 million.

The MP will also welcome the double helping of Neighbourhood Renewal cash for his constituency this year. Designed to improve core services in its most deprived areas Pendle will be getting £980,000 - twice the allocation previously announced. The MP will explain that spending of this fund will be decided by local people and according to local priorities. In 2002/3 Pendle will get
£1.47 million and £1.96 million the year after.

The MP will emphasis to the meeting that this is a good start to turning around years of neglect in Pendle but there is still a huge amount to do.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 046/01 Thursday 22 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SHOCKED BY FARM DEATHS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is waging a campaign to make farms safer places.

Figures unearthed this week by the MP show that in the last four years (since 1996/7), five farm workers and two members of the public have been killed on farms in Lancashire. In the county's farms 74 have been seriously injured over the same period.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, the MP said: "Farms can be incredibly hazardous places and constant vigilance is required. I want to see a new emphasis on safety."

The MP also revealed that 43 children - age 16 and under - have died nation-wide over the last ten years as a result of accidents arising from agricultural work.

The MP commented: "It is astonishing that children as young as 13 can legally drive tractors on a farm."

The MP continued: "The roll call of children's deaths is horrifying. It is time we did something about it."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 048/01 Thursday 22 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NO THREAT TO HUMAN HEALTH FROM FOOT AND MOUTH OUTBREAK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has stressed there is no threat to human health from the outbreak of foot and mouth disease found in pigs at an abattoir in Essex. However, the MP has warned the impact on farmers could be catastrophic if the disease is found to have spread nationwide.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "All animals that are affected are destroyed and the farmer receives full market value in compensation. But after all the problems agriculture has been going through, this is an extra burden the farmers could do without.."

There is an 8 km restriction area around the abattoir and the source of the infected pigs in Buckinghamshire and the Isle of Wight. There is a temporary ban on all exports of live animals, meat, milk and other animal products as during the outbreak in Greece last year.

Note to Editors: Foot and mouth disease is caused by a virus and triggers high temperatures and sores, known as vesicules, in the mouths and on the hooves of animals. Symptoms can include lameness and animals going off their feed. Although human infection of Foot and Mouth Disease has been reported in the past, cases are rare and of no health significance - the last report of human infection appears to have been in the 1960s.

The last major British outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease was in 1967. More than 2,364 outbreaks were detected around Britain, sparking the slaughter of 442,000 animals. It cost the country an estimated £150 million in slaughter costs and lost sales in 1967 and 1968. Compensation worth £27 million was paid out to farmers.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 049/01 Thursday 22 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

HAGUE'S SUMS DON'T ADD UP says PRENTICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has fired a broadside against Conservative tax plans which he claims don't add up. He says their policies are unravelling almost as soon as they are made.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, the MP said: "The Conservatives promised in their latest policy document, "Believing in Britain" that they would restore a married couples allowance. I would advise my Pendle constituents to read the small print!"

Inland Revenue statistics show that over 8 million out of 10 million married couples gain nothing from this new proposal from the Conservative Party. Married couples without children gain nothing. Married couples with children over 11 gain nothing. And married couples both in work gain nothing.

The MP added: "The measures already taken by the government help all parents with children. All gain from record increases in child benefit. Nearly 9 out of 10 taxpaying families stand to gain from the children's tax credit and the working families tax credit which helps mothers in single-earner couples stay at home."

Note to Editors: Married Couples Allowance

”We will reintroduce a Married Couples Allowance”.
William Hague, East Anglian Daily Times, 20 January 2001

”We will restore a Married Couples Allowance”.
Michael Portillo, Tory party Conference speech, 3 October 2000

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 050/01 Sunday 25 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE CALLS FOR CANCELLATION OF HARE COURSING EVENT AMID DISEASE FEARS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has joined the RSPCA and Lancashire West MP Colin Pickthall in urging organisers to call off the Waterloo Cup as fears grow about the spread of foot and mouth disease. The event at Great Altcar, Lancashire, is the biggest event in the hare coursing calendar and is expected to attract coursers and supporters from all over the country. The three-day Waterloo Cup dates back to 1836.

John Avizienius, senior scientific officer in the RSPCA’s farm animals department, backed the official advice of the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Farmers Union that people should not make unnecessary trips into the countryside.

He said: “Foot and mouth disease can be spread by vehicles and on clothing and it would be impossible for the organisers of the Waterloo Cup to guarantee that everyone attending the event comes from an area that is not affected by disease.”

The Pendle MP has taken a strong stand against hare coursing. He told constituency workers yesterday that it would be “highly irresponsible” for the event to go ahead. “Whatever one thinks of the ethics of this so called sport, it would be madness for the organisers to pretend it is business as usual.”

Mr Pickthall, whose West Lancashire constituency includes the Altcar estate, urged the Waterloo Cup organisers to follow the example of hunts, which have been suspended for seven days.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 051/01 Wednesday 7 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ACTION FOR WARM HOMES TO BE STEPPED UP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says delays in installing central heating in the homes of people in Pendle who successfully applied for help under the new Home Energy Efficiency Scheme are now reducing.

John Clough, the Chief Executive of the Eaga Partnership, which is responsible for carrying out the work, told the MP there have been "delays in some areas for clients awaiting the fitting of new central heating systems or repairs to existing broken down systems". He said plans for training 400 heating engineers every six months were now being implemented.

He went on: "We have cleared the backlog in all but a few areas. Over 7,000 families have been visited in recent weeks, 4,500 have had their heating systems repaired, for a relatively low cost, and the remainder are waiting for a new boiler to be fitted. In the meantime we are providing these families with vouchers to purchase some safe and portable temporary heaters."

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This is very good news. Long delays in getting work carried out are, quite frankly, unacceptable. We can't have people shivering at home when their applications for help under the HEES were approved months ago."

Last month, the MP welcomed the new draft Fuel Poverty Strategy unveiled by the Government .Around three million households - 4.5 million people are set to benefit. It includes targets to ensure that by 2010 no vulnerable household (older people, families with young children, the disabled and chronically sick) in the UK need risk ill health due to a cold home. New Warm Home Zone pilots will ensure that action to tackle fuel poverty is co-ordinated on the ground.

more follows

ACTION FOR WARM HOMES TO BE STEPPED UP

The MP added: "The Conservatives have an appalling record on fuel poverty. Half of single pensioners and a fifth of pensioner couples were living in fuel poverty in 1996. The Conservatives promised not to impose VAT on fuel. But Michael Portillo, as Chief Secretary, introduced VAT on fuel, and the Conservatives would have doubled VAT on fuel if Labour had not stopped it."

Note 1 to Editors: Since June 2000 households unable to afford heat were beginning to be more easily identified under a targeted regional referral programme, part of the new Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES). The Scheme can provide a grant of up to £2,000 to make homes warmer, more energy efficient and more secure. HEES will focus on households with the greatest health risks - older people, people with children under 16 and people who are disabled or chronically sick.

HEES is funded by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. The scheme in East Lancs is run by the Eaga Partnership and they process all the applications. Anyone who thinks they may qualify for a grant can pick up a leaflet from the council or the MPs office in Nelson.

Note 2 to Editor: In 1997 there were 48,874 unfit dwellings in East Lancashire which equates to more than 22% of the total housing stock. In Pendle it is estimated that there are 5,400 unfit houses. nearly all of which are situated within the private sector. Within Pendle's SRB6 area 46% of the houses are classified as unfit. In Pendle it is estimated that at least £150m is needed to deal with unfitness within the private sector housing stock. In 1996 6% of the Borough's private sector housing stock was empty

Note 3 to Editors: Since 1997 a wide range of policies and initiatives have been brought forward to tackle fuel poverty. From improving building standards for new homes, to massive investment in social housing, and advice and help to improve energy efficiency of older buildings.

Already 600,000 homes have been made more energy efficient through the scheme. Over the next three years it will benefit a further 600,000 households, of whom 400,000 will be pensioners.

The number of fuel poor households has already fallen, from around 5.5 million in 1996 to around 4.5 million in 1999. Three million of these households ñ with elderly residents, children, a disability or long term illness - are particularly vulnerable to cold,

In the 1997 Budget the Government introduced Winter Fuel Payments at rates of £20 and £50 for eligible households and then increased them in 1999 to £100. Set at £150 for future years, for this winter the Winter Fuel Payment was doubled to £200. The payments benefit over eight million households with a person aged 60 and over.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 052/01 Sunday 25 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE SLATES TORY PENSIONS POLICY

The Conservatives pensions policy is now in ruins says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. Speaking at the weekend at the annual meeting of the Pendle Labour Party the MP claimed the Conservatives' policy had degenerated into chaos.

Speaking in Nelson, the MP said: "The Conservatives' pensions spokesman, David Willetts, has admitted that his preferred policy is still to scrap the Winter Fuel

Payment and free TV licence and to pay them as part of the basic state pension. This policy would be an administrative nightmare. It would be chaotic and costly. The Government would have to enter into up to 11 million separate arrangements with Britain's pensioners, which would have a set-up cost alone of around £100 million let alone the cost of ongoing administration. It would take thousands of extra civil servants to process these claims."

"The Conservatives have admitted that part of his policy would be paid for by cuts to the Working Families Tax Credit as a result of which 116,000 families will be hit by an average tax rise of £150 a year."

Overall the Government is spending £4.4 billion extra a year in real terms on pensioners in 2001/02 compared to 1997. By April 2001 the average pensioner household will be £580 a year better off in real terms than in 1997 - over £11 a week. In 2003 the Government plans to introduce a Pension Credit designed to help around 5.5 million pensioners with low or modest savings.

In April 2001 the basic state pension will rise by £5 to £72.50 a week for a single pensioner and by £8 to £115.90 for couples. In April 2002 further increases will take the basic pension to £75.50

more follows

for single pensioners and £120.70 for couples.

Currently the basic Minimum Income Guarantee is £78.45 a week for single pensioners and £121.95 a week for couples. This represents £5.40 a week more for single pensioners, and £8.50 more for couples, than if income support had been increased in line with prices since 1997/98. From April 2001 the Government will simplify the MIG by setting it at one higher rate for all single pensioners and one for all couples. This will mean that, by April this year, no single pensioner has to live on less than £92.15 a week and no pensioner couple has to live on less than £140.55.

Note to Editors: As well as boosting pensioner incomes through the tax and benefit system The Government has acted to improve the deal pensioners get on health, travel, recreation and heating costs.

• Free eye tests for all over 60s after the Conservatives abolished them.

• Concessionary bus passes for pensioners will be introduced from June 2001, so that all pensioners are guaranteed at least half price bus fares.

• VAT on fuel has been cut, helping pensioners to heat their homes.

• In November 1999 the Government introduced free TV licences for all households with someone aged 75 or over, saving over three million households £2 a week.

• Elderly people getting help to insulate their homes, with grants provided through our New Home Efficiency Scheme of up to £2,000 for 400,000 pensioners.

• Up to 150,000 low-income pensioners are being provided with better home security by 2002.

• Free museum entry for pensioners.

• Nursing care in nursing homes will be free from October 2001, benefiting around 35,000 people at any one time.

• The value of a person's home will not be included in the means test for the first three months from admission to residential or nursing care from April 2001, benefiting 30,000 people each year.

• An extra £900 million by 2004 for new intermediate care services to allow older people to live more independent lives.

• The NHS breast screening programme, currently for women aged 50-64, will be extended to women aged 65-70 and on request for those over 70 by 2004.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 053/01 Monday 26 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PUT ART ON PUBLIC DISPLAY says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on the Government to ensure priceless items from the country's national collections are put on display in public places.

At culture questions this afternoon, the MP told the Commons that the Tate Gallery in London can put only 15% of its world renowned collection on display at any given time. He wants items from the national collections to be displayed in public spaces such as railway station concourses, airports, cinema and theatre foyers. The MP claimed the National Portrait Gallery could only show 18% of its collection and the Science Museum less than 5%.

The MP said: "There are any number of interesting items from the national collections which should be available to venues all over the country which can show them to advantage in a secure environment."

The MP has asked Arts Minister Alan Howarth how many items from the national collections were on loan to private sector organisations and of these how many could not be viewed by members of the general public. The Minister told the MP that 1000 items were out on loan with 86% accessible by the public. The Minister said the Government was keen to show as many items as possible from the collections.

The MP told the Minister it was disappointing that 14% were off limits to the public. Speaking afterwards the MP said: “My own view is that lending to private sector organisations is only appropriate where the general public has a right of access.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 054/01 Monday 26 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CHURCH SHOULD SPENT MORE ON ITS CHURCHES IN DEPRIVED AREAS says PENDLE MP

In the Commons today, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, urged the Church Commissioners to use the recently published index of deprivation - which highlights deprivation at ward level - to decide how much money it gives to each diocese.

The MP says the cash could be used to help impoverished congregations with the upkeep of threatened churches.

But Stuart Bell MP, speaking for the Church Commissioners, said the matter fell outside the responsibility of the Commissioners saying there were separate grants available for churches in peril.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: “There are 16,000 Church of England churches in England and many of them are architectural jewels with a marvellous history. Indeed, 13,000 of these churches are listed.”

“We cannot allow a situation to develop where worshipers in less well off areas are expected to shoulder huge repair bills.”

The Government has previously pledged to remove VAT on church repairs but its implementation, controversially, is being held up by the European Commission.

The MP commented: “While this is being sorted out the Government is apparently looking at some sort of grant-in-aid. This would be ideal. For many congregations their prayers would be answered.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 055/01 Monday 26 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SPOTTING THE SYMPTOMS OF FOOT AND MOUTH

Farmers are not vets but they should be expected to identify foot and mouth in their animals. This was the message Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, spelt out in the Commons today as MPs quizzed Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, on the spreading outbreak of the virulent disease.

The MP told the Minister he was surprised the pig farmer in Northumberland at the very centre of the outbreak had not recognised any signs of the infection in his animals. The MP told members that he had visited the MAFF web site for information earlier in the day and declared the symptoms of foot and mouth in pigs "from day one" were "unmistakable".

The MP wanted an assurance that farmers were up to speed on the symptoms of foot and mouth and other deadly animal diseases. The Minister told the MP that farmers had not seen the disease for thirty years.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "Farmers are clearly the first line of defence. While they are not vets, they are closest to the animals they rear. It is in their interest and ours that, wherever possible, they can identify these dreadful scourges."

The MP added: "We also need to look at the conditions in which some farm animals are held and reared. Some of the information that is emerging is a real eye opener."

The MP is a long time campaigner on food safety and animal welfare issues.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 056/01 Monday 26 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

APPLES AND PEARS - PENDLE MP WANTS TO BRING BACK THE OLD VARIETIES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling on the Government to encourage producers to bring onto the market varieties of apples, pears and other fruits that were readily available in 19th century England but are rarely found today.

The MP, who is a keen cook, says there is a huge variety of delicious fruit which could tempt the nation's palate if only growers would bring them to market.

The MP said: "There are many types of apples and pears which were very familiar to our Victorian fore-fathers and mothers but have since disappeared. It is time we brought them back."

Agriculture Minister, Joyce Quinn, told the Pendle MP today: "The England Rural Development Programme can assist growers to pursue new market opportunities, for example grants under the Rural Enterprise Scheme can help with the marketing of quality agricultural products, including older varieties of apples, pears and other fruit."

"The National Fruit collection at Brogdale is a rich resource containing over 3,000 distinct varieties of apples, pears and other stone and bush fruits which are available to those interested in identifying old varieties suitable for niche markets."

"The Government supports the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale at a cost of £180,000 per annum."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 057/01 Wednesday 28 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MORE HELP FOR 2,800 PENSIONERS IN PENDLE

New official figures obtained by local MP, Gordon Prentice, show that 2,800 pensioners in Pendle are now benefiting from the Government's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) for pensioners.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Tackling pensioner poverty is one of my main priorities. I want all pensioners in Pendle to have a decent standard of living.”

“From April the MIG for single pensioners will rise by up to £13 to £92 a week. Couples will get £140 a week and that’s up to £18 more. Help with rents and council tax comes on top of that. In addition, pensioners will be able have more savings before your entitlement to the MIG is affected.”

The MP added: “From April the Minimum Income Guarantee is going up again. That not only helps pensioners who are already getting it but also means more pensioners are eligible.”

“I’m urging all pensioners in Pendle who think they might qualify to get in touch with the Minimum Income Guarantee hotline. I want to make sure pensioners get their entitlement to extra help.”

The hotline number is 0800 028 1111.

Notes for editors: The MIG claim line is being run from a new call centre in Newcastle. Pensioners are able to phone the free number and a trained operator takes them through the claim form. The form is sent to the pensioner for them to check and sign and return to their local social security office where the claim will be dealt with. The line operate from 7am to 9pm Monday to Friday.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 058/01 Thursday 1 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP UNVEILS NEW STATISTICS ON PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has unveiled new statistics showing the number of people in Pendle who are benefiting from recent Government initiatives.

The Pendle MP quizzed Social Security Minister, Jeff Rooker, who said the Government’s objective was to eradicate child poverty in 20 years, and halve it within 10.

The Minister told the MP: “Measures in our first four Budgets will lift over one million children out of poverty. These include record increases to Child Benefit,

Working Families Tax Credit, increases in the income-related benefits, the minimum wage and tax changes."

"Child benefit will be worth £15.50 a week for the eldest child and £10.35 a week for other children from April 2001. Nationally about 7 million families receive child benefit, and **in Pendle 11,116 families benefit."**

"We now have the lowest unemployment rate in 25 years. The New Deals have helped lone parents, the young unemployed, the long-term unemployed, the over 50s and partners of the unemployed to move from benefit into work. In the period since May 1997 the number of people claiming Jobseekers' Allowance nationally has reduced from 1,562,400 to 1,044,900. In Pendle the number has reduced from 1,500 to 1,300. Since May 1997 the number of lone parents who claim Income Support has decreased from 1,013,500 to 894,100 nationally and in Pendle from 1,600 to 1,400."

more follows

MP UNVEILS NEW STATISTICS ON PENDLE

"Older people are disproportionately affected by fuel poverty. So we have introduced Winter Fuel Payments to help with their heaviest fuel bill. This winter, the payment is £200 for households who qualify. **Over 16,000 older people in Pendle have received a Winter Fuel Payment for this winter.**"

"To demonstrate our commitment to combating pensioner poverty, this year we will spend £4.5 billion extra in real terms on pensioners. **Some 14,200 pensioners in Pendle will benefit from the substantial increases in the basic state pension** this April and next; this year's increase is £5 a week for single pensioners and £8 for couples."

"In addition we have introduced free TV licences for the over 75s of whom we estimate there are about **6,300 in Pendle.**"

"**2,800 pensioner families in Pendle are receiving the Minimum Income Guarantee,** which we introduced in April 1999 to help our poorest pensioners. From April they will be at least £15 a week, or £800 a year, better off in real terms as a result of Government measures since 1997."

"Other reforms in the pipeline include: the new Pension Credit in 2003 designed to ensure that pensioners benefit from their savings; the launch of Stakeholder Pensions in April this year; and the introduction of the State Second Pension in April 2002 both of which will help provide greater security for tomorrow's pensioners."

Commenting on the statistics, the MP said: "There is still a lot to be done but these figures show we have made a pretty good start."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 059/01 Tuesday 6 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP WELCOMES RISE IN MINIMUM WAGE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the increase in the National Minimum Wage which goes up to £4.10 for the over 21 year olds on 1st October 2001, and to £4.20 In October 2002. This means a worker earning the NMW and working 40 hours a week will be £16 a week better off from October.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The minimum wage has had a huge impact on Pendle. When it was introduced at £3.60 an hour in April 1999, over 8% of Pendle people in full time work and 27% in part time work benefited from the pay boost."

"The latest increase means a worker earning the NMW and working 25 hours a week will be £10 a week better off. The rise is broadly in line with the average increase in wages since April 1999 - 5.3% a year. Employers have over six months notice to prepare for the increase."

The announcement follows the unanimous recommendation of the Low Pay Commission, which includes employers' and employees' representatives, to increase the rate to £4.10. The CBI has a representative on the Low Pay Commission.

The Low Pay Commission Report published yesterday says:

- 1.3 million people benefited from the introduction of the NMW. Seventy per cent were women and around two-thirds were part-time (these are revised Office of National Statistics figures based on detailed research since the NMW was introduced in April 1999);

more follows

PENDLE MP WELCOMES RISE IN MINIMUM WAGE

The minimum wage has also helped close the gap in regional pay differences.

Note to Editors:

What employers are saying about the rise:

The CBI has accepted the rise "The government has gone as far as it can without moving to a point where the damage outweighs the benefits. It is giving an 11% per cent rise to some 1.3 million low paid workers to help ensure the wage doesn't wither on the vine."

Digby Jones, Director General - CBI News release 5/3/01

What the Conservatives said about the National Minimum Wage:

"The Minimum Wage is the height of irresponsibility."

William Hague MP
House of Commons, 12 March 1998

"But if Labour really wants to emulate our policies on employment generation, it must adopt all of them - including our rejection of the damaging European social chapter with its possible consequences, and the minimum wage, which would deal a body blow to low earners."

David Heathcoat Amory MP
Hansard 23 January 1996

Labour's demolition policy number one is a minimum wage. Attempts to increase wages through legislation do not work."

Michael Portillo MP
House of Commons 1 December 1994

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 060/01 Wednesday 28 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BOOST FOR SCHOOLS IN PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the latest cash boost for education in Lancashire in 2001/02. Education Secretary, David Blunkett, told the MP that Lancashire Education Authority is to get a total allocation of £510.1 million for SSA plus £40.5 million in special grants.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Our children deserve first class education and the Government is doing its very best to make sure they get the resources they need.”

Schools in Lancashire will receive around £13.8 million cash in the hand from the new schools standard grant next year, compared with £7.6 million this year. This means a typical primary will receive £20,000 and a typical secondary £60,000.

The Government is preparing to tackle the scandal of out of date school buildings, and to invest in modernising schools. As a result, schools have so far benefited from the national three-fold increase in capital investment in buildings since 1996-97 - when £683 million was invested by central government as compared to the £2.1 billion this year.

The total being invested includes almost £1 billion of funding devolved directly to every school over the next three years - 40% more than the total capital investment in schools in 1996-97. This will give a typical secondary school its own capital budget of £50,000 in 2003-04, up from £36,000 this year, and a typical primary school £16,000 up from £12,000 this year.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 061/01 Wednesday 28 February 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MENTAL HEALTH BOOST FOR PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement from Burnley Health Care NHS Trust of the increase in the number of consultant psychiatrists from 6 to 9 posts.

Last month the MP spoke to the North East Lancashire branch of the mental health charity MIND. The discussion mainly centred on the December White Paper ‘Reforming the Mental Health Act’ which mentioned the investment the Government has made in mental health services. Over the last two years the NHS has recruited

3000 new staff in mental health services, including over 350 more consultant psychiatrists and nearly 2,000 nurses.

The MP got in touch with the Chief Executive at Burnley NHS Trust and has now been told that at the present time there are six established posts in the field and that two of these posts are vacant. The recruitment difficulty locally has been recognised and East Lancashire Health Authority have recently provided additional funds to enable two additional posts in the field of adult psychiatry to be established this year with an additional post in the following year.

On completion this will increase the establishment's from six to nine posts and the Trust are optimistic that recruitment will be possible over the coming year.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 062/01 Tuesday 6 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP IN BID TO TRACK DOWN SOURCE OF HUGE EXPLOSIVE FIREWORKS

Campaigning Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has vowed to track down the source of the hugely explosive commercial fireworks that have been used by vandals to blow up phone boxes in East Lancashire.

The MP says strict controls are now needed to stop these deadly fireworks from maiming and killing people. Several fatalities have been recorded nationwide - and one recently in Burnley.

The MP quizzed Industry Minister, Kim Howells, on the number of commercial fireworks were imported into the United Kingdom over the last year and what controls applied as to their end use. The answer he says "disturbed" him as the figures do not identify the "blockbusters" from ordinary "back garden" fireworks.

The Minister told the MP: “The Overseas Trade Statistics do not separately identify commercial fireworks or provide numbers imported. The value and weight of fireworks imported into the United Kingdom during the 12 months from December 1999 to November 2000 are £22.4 million and 12,575 metric tons respectively. The Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1997 introduced comprehensive controls on the types and sizes of fireworks which can be sold to the public.”

The Pendle MP added: “ Fireworks are a multi million pound business. But if they get into the wrong hands they are deadly. I am urging Ministers to categorise separately these commercial fireworks which can kill and check their end use.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 063/01 Wednesday 7 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NEW BLITZ TO REPLACE LEAD PIPES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a renewed drive by Lancashire County Council to get rid of old lead pipes which can pose a threat to health. In a survey carried out in 1999 in the North West region, 375 properties (or 2.1%) out of 15,574 samples failed the current lead standard.

The Pendle MP quizzed Environment Minister, Bob Ainsworth, on the programme to replace these pipes. The Minister told the MP: “Under Regulations laid before Parliament in December 2000, North West Water and other water companies are embarking on major programmes of new and improved treatment to minimise the capacity of water to dissolve lead from pipes. These programmes should enable the Drinking Water Directive's interim standard of 25 microgrammes of lead per litre of water to be substantially met by December 2003, and will go a long way towards meeting the final standard of 10 microgrammes of lead per litre of water which has to be complied with by 2013.”

“Where the standards are not met, water companies will need to replace (or line) their own lead pipes and advise consumers as to any action that it is desirable that they take in the interests of their health. We shall know the full extent to which these additional measures will be needed when the treatment programmes have been completed. Property owners remain responsible for the pipes within their own properties.”

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Lead pipes are a nasty legacy of the past that we can do without. It is a big job but we need to get rid of them asap.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 064/01 Wednesday 7 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP WANTS NEW DRIVE TO RECRUIT SPECIAL CONSTABLES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing the Home Secretary to step up the recruitment of more special constables in Lancashire. In the County, the number of specials has fallen by 138 since September 1997.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Full time police numbers in Lancashire are rising and that’s splendid news. But there is a key role for the special constable too.”

“Around one in five specials go on to join the police full-time but there are good, public spirited people out there who are keen to serve - but only on a part time basis. We’ve got to bring them on board.”

Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke, told the MP yesterday:
“We are currently considering a number of recruitment and retention issues in relation to the Special Constabulary with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Police Authorities with a view to seeing how best to address the decline in the number of special constables in England and Wales.”

Note to Editors: Home Office funded research completed in May 2000 on wastage in the special constabulary in five forces found that of the 293 former specials questioned, 18.8 per cent (55 people) had left the Specials in order to join the regular force.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 065/01 Wednesday 7 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BUDGET IS GOOD FOR PENDLE says PRENTICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed today's Budget saying it is a real boost for public services. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The clear priority is to put schools and hospitals first".

The MP said: "Head-teachers of every primary school in Pendle will receive not £10,000 as planned but £13,000 with the larger primary schools receiving not £50,000 but £63,000. And for our secondary schools in Pendle, head-teachers of the smaller schools will receive not £57,000 but £68,000 and the larger schools a payment of not £92,000 but £115,000. I know this will be hugely popular with the local heads!"

"Burnley Health Care Trust will also be getting more cash as well as a fund to recruit key health service staff."

"Every parent worries about their children and wants them growing up safe from the scourge of drugs. That's why the Government is investing an extra £300 million over 3 years to fight crime and drugs, with money going direct to local crime and safety partnerships."

"The Government's package, for hard working families includes extending the lowest 10p rate of tax to give an affordable income tax cut to many of the 11,116 families throughout Pendle and a £5 a week increase in the Working Families Tax Credit for local families. This makes work pay and helps reduce unemployment which has already fallen by 10% since 1997."

"And there's the £1O a week Children's Tax Credit - the Government's family tax cut. For families in the year of a child's birth it will rise, as a baby credit, to £20 a week - up to £1,040 a

more follows

BUDGET IS GOOD FOR PENDLE says PRENTICE

year from April 2002."

"On average families with children will be £240 a year better off as a result of all the measures taking effect this year."

“The Conservatives are committed to making £16 billion of cuts in vital public services, or £24 million here in Pendle, hitting local schools and hospitals.”

“People in Pendle remember the last Tory economic disaster when unemployment hit a million and interest rates rose to 15% for a full year. Nobody wants a return to those days.”

Note to Editors: The Government is transforming support for families and children. This Budget includes a package to help parents when their child is newly born, measures to tackle poverty and build stronger communities.

• Children's Tax Credit raised and worth up to £10 a week when introduced in April 2001. Around 5 million families are eligible for our family tax cut.

• Children's Tax Credit increased to up to £20 a week from April 2002 for families in the first year of a child's birth, making it worth £1,040 a year.

• To help hard working families, the Government has made an affordable tax cut, extending by £300 above inflation - to £1,880 - the amount of income taxed at 1Op in the pound rather than 22p.

• Flat rate of Maternity Pay raised from £60.20 to £75 in April 2002 and £100 the following year and pay period extended from 18 to 26 weeks from 2003

• Right to 2 weeks paid paternity leave for working fathers from 2003 paid at same flat rate as Statutory Maternity Pay.

• Basic credit in Working Families Tax Credit will rise by £5 a week in June 2001

• A £200 increase in Sure Start Maternity Grant to £500 from April 2002

• In addition to the increases in state pension this April - confirmed at £5 for a single pensioner and £8 for a pensioner couple - and April 2002, age related personal tax allowances will rise by £240 over and above inflation by 2003.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 066/01 Thursday 8 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

STEP UP SEWER REPLACEMENT WORK URGES MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for a new sense of urgency to get crumbling old sewers replaced by state-of-the-art new ones.

On Wednesday the worried MP quizzed Environment Minister, Bob Ainsworth, on how many miles of sewers in Lancashire and the rest of the UK were in a serious state of disrepair and needed to be repaired or replaced within the next 10 years.

The Minister told the MP: "In the North West Water region, 4,597 miles of sewer (18.6% of their total) are assessed as being in a poor condition. For England and Wales, 10.6% of the sewer network is assessed as being in a poor condition."

The Minister went on: "Between 2000 and 2005, North West Water plan to renew or renovate 281 miles of sewer. For England and Wales, the comparable figure is 1,130 miles. Companies plans for 2006 to 2010 will be reviewed as part of the next periodic review of water companies' prices. The condition of sewers is only one of several factors to be take into account when assessing whether they need to be repaired or replaced. Various studies are underway to review the basis for future investment."

The MP commented: "North West Water are no doubt doing their best given the Herculean nature of the job. But at this rate of progress we are not going to complete the work for another eighty years."

The MP added: "In this instance, out of sight is not out of mind. We neglect the sewers at our peril."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 067/01 Thursday 8 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

HILL FARMERS DESERVE SUPPORT says MP

Hill farmers in Pendle deserve a better deal says local MP, Gordon Prentice. He claims the system is letting them down and an urgent re-think is needed.

Earlier this week, the MP had pressed Agriculture Minister, Joyce Quin, on the annual amount public subsidy that went to a typical hill farmer in England. The reply, he admits, astonished him.

The Minister told the MP: "The average total direct subsidy payment to full-time LFA (less favoured areas) cattle and sheep farm businesses in England in 1999/00 is estimated as £24,400 per farm. This figure excludes the additional support farmers

receive from the consumer through the maintenance of EU agricultural prices above world levels by the Common Agricultural Policy."

The MP commented: "I am the hill farmers' friend. But what kind of Alice in Wonderland economics gives the average hill farmer an income of £6,000 a year when the public subsidy is four times that figure? This shows the old production based subsidies of the CAP haven't worked for hill farmers. We need a reformed CAP which underpins the incomes of hill farmers rather than simply providing ever increasing subsidies to loss making businesses."

"Agriculture is going through a really difficult time at the moment. I want to see a complete re-think about how we produce and market the food we need. I want to see well paid hill farmers helping to manage our countryside - not people living in poverty. What we have at the moment is completely unsustainable."

more follows

HILL FARMERS DESERVE SUPPORT says MP

Note to Editors: In the Agenda 2000 negotiations (to reform the CAP), EU member states agreed to change hill farm supports from a headage based production subsidy to an area-based payment. Changing to an area basis will ensure that these subsidies are not subject to attack under a future WTO (World Trade Organisation) round. Area payments also remove incentives for over-stocking and thereby promote sustainable environmental management of sensitive upland areas.

It is impossible to move to an area basis without some redistribution. Under the new payment method there will be an equal number of gainers as losers. But the Government has put in place a safety net to ensure the transition is made gradually over three years. In 2001 the safety net will guarantee at least 90% of 2000 receipts. In 2002 it will guarantee at least 80% of 2000 receipts. In 2003 it will guarantee at least 50% of 2000 receipts.

The gradual taper in HFA payments is compensated for by a significant increase in spending on rural development measures like Countryside Stewardship, Environmentally Sensitive Areas and the Rural Enterprise Scheme. All these schemes offer real benefits to hill farmers, recognising the importance of hill farming to upland communities and the environment. The new Hill Farm Allowance replaces the HLCA this year. The following table indicates the level of hill farm support over recent years:

Year	Hill Farm Payments
1997	£27.2m
1998	£43.3m
1999	£44.3m
2000	£42.5m
2001	£43.6m
2002	£40.8m
2003	£37.2m
2004	£34.6m

Every year since the last election, hill farmers have received more in HLCAs than in the last year of the previous government (I 997).

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 068/01 Tuesday 13 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE TO GET BOOST IN DOCTOR NUMBERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed the Government's announcement today to offer cash incentives to doctors to move into Pendle where there is currently a shortage of medically qualified professionals. The scheme extends to "under-doctored" areas across the country and targets East Lancashire for special treatment.

In the East Lancashire Health Authority area, 15 GPs out of 276 (or 5.4% of the total) are due to retire by 2005. This is the highest percentage in England outside Greater London.

The MP explained: "There will be a £5,000 cash bonus for newly qualified GPs who choose to work for at least 3 years in a deprived or under-doctored area - that is those areas such as Pendle with less than the average number of GPs per 100,000 population."

The deal also means a £5,000 "Golden Hello" for new GPs. All newly qualified GPs who choose to work as GPs will receive a bonus payment of £5,000. At present only about 40% of trainee GPs join the mainstream GP workforce. There is also £10,000 for GPs who work through to their 65 birthday The payments will be available from this Summer.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "You cannot train a doctor overnight and the blunt truth is that we have too few doctors. We inherited these shortages from the previous Government and we are now trying to turn things round."

"We also need to "grow our own" doctors and not expect to replenish the medical manpower we need by constantly looking to

more follows

overseas countries - who often have health problems a million times worse than we do."

Last October, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, urged Ministers to offer fresh incentives to doctors to practice in East Lancashire to replace the GPs in the area who are set to retire over the next few years.

Note to Editors: The NHS Plan includes a target of 2,000 more GPs, 20,000 extra nurses and 6,500 extra therapists, 1,000 extra medical school places.

In the Commons today (Tuesday) Health Secretary Alan Milburn set out recruitment and retention initiatives aimed at getting the extra family doctors and nurses the NHS needs.

The initiatives include:

£5,000 for all newly qualified GPs who choose to work as GPs

An additional £5,000 for newly qualified GPs who choose to work in deprived, under-doctored areas

£10,000 for GPs who work through to their 65 birthday

Up to £5,000 for GP returners working full-time or part-time in the NHS

10.4% increase in bursaries for student nurses, midwives and therapists

£1,000 payment for all nurse, midwives and therapist returners

£15 million for 50 extra NHS workplace nurseries on top of the 100 workplace nurseries already planned

All new hospital developments to be required to design-in workplace nursery facilities

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 069/01 Thursday 15 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CHRIS WOODHEAD

What categories of advice given to the Education Secretary by the Chief Inspector of Schools are confidential.

Woodhead speaking out now is neither here nor there. He maintains that this Government has betrayed a generation of children. But did he express reservations at

the time. Anyone reading the last three Annual Reports from OFSTED would have concluded that Chris Woodhead was happy with the way things were going.

What attributes did my friend see in Chris Woodhead which persuaded him to keep Chris Woodhead on when many people in education and outside were saying that he was like a dose of anthrax and it would be a huge mistake. Was it loyalty, sincerity, consistency?

And now with the benefit of hindsight was it an error of judgement to keep him on?

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 070/01 Wednesday 14 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BIG INCREASE IN SCHOOLS ACCESS GRANTS FOR THE DISABLED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement of £50 million to improve access to schools for children with disabilities. The money, which will be allocated through the Schools Access Initiative, is the first tranche of £220 million available over the next three years. All primary and secondary schools including voluntary aided schools and nursery provision are eligible for support under the initiative with the funds being distributed by the Lancashire LEA (Local Education Authority.)

The MP said: “Lancashire County Council is getting £632,970 to spend on its own schools and this is marvellous. The county schools here in Pendle will be soon seeing the benefits.”

He continued: “I am also delighted to see that five voluntary aided schools in Pendle have been earmarked for money to go towards adapting the buildings and improving access for disabled children. The amounts range from £3,394 for Nelson St Paul’s CE Primary to £53,341 for Fisher More High School in Colne. The other schools include £23,276 for Nelson Holy Saviour RC Primary, £4,073 for Colne Christ Church CE school and £34,914 for Sacred Heart Primary in Colne.”

The MP said: “School life is hard enough, even for the able-bodied. This new money will go some way to making the lives of disabled young people just that bit easier.”

Note to editor: Some 1600 schools are benefiting from this funding this year, and the support available has been increased five-fold from the £4 million inherited in 1997-1998 to £50 million this year.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 071/01 Wednesday 14 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP ROAMS ON THE WIRRAL

Campaigning MP, Gordon Prentice, will be talking to people on the Wirral this Friday about one of the issues closest to his heart. The MP was invited by Wirral Constituency Labour Party to tell them about the successful campaign on the right to roam. The gathering will also include members of the local rambling associations. The MP will say: “The foot and mouth catastrophe has cast an appalling shadow over the countryside and tackling this issue is everyone’s top priority. None of us wants to see people walking through the countryside where there is even the remotest risk of spreading this dreadful disease.”

Speaking at Westminster before the event the MP said: “The legal right to roam is a step closer after the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act into law. It was a long, hard battle and there is still a huge amount of work to be done by the Countryside Agency to map the entire country showing the open access areas.”

The Act is already beginning to bite. Magistrates can use greater powers to clear blocked paths and there are now tougher penalties available for wildlife offences.

The MP continued: “4 million acres of open countryside are going to be opened to walkers and I want to see access maps available not just in book shops but posted on the internet so the click of a mouse will be enough to show people where they can go.”

The MP is backing a call by the Ramblers' Association for a 'fast track' introduction of the right to roam on a region-by-region basis as each area's mapping process is completed. The North West is to get priority.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 072/01 Tuesday 13 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

"MS DRUGS WILL NOT BE DENIED TO THOSE WHO NEED THEM" - PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will tell the Spring meeting of the Lancashire, Greater Manchester and South Cumbria region of the MS Society that new drugs that help people with the condition will and must be made available to those who can benefit from them.

The MP, who is Secretary of the Parliamentary all party group on Multiple Sclerosis and President of the Pendle branch of the MS society, will tell the meeting at the Pennine Way hotel in Oldham this Saturday that there is "absolutely no possibility" of some people being denied beta interferon by the NHS in future while others continue to receive it.

At present the drug is being evaluated by NICE (the National Institute of Clinical Excellence). Guidance is expected to be issued by November 2001.

The MP believes that beta-interferon and other drugs can help patients with the relapsing-remitting form of Multiple Sclerosis and also those with the secondary progressive form of the disease.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "MS very often strikes people out of the blue in the prime of life. Doctors are working as hard as they can to develop drugs to control and eventually cure this disabling disease. These new drugs cost money but that is why we have a nationwide system of social insurance - to protect all of us from what may be around the corner. There are almost 60 million of us in the UK but only 85,000 with MS."

Note to Editors: The Department of Health takes the view that because there appeared to be genuine uncertainty over the appropriate use of beta-

more follows

interferon, which was reflected in different prescribing patterns across the country, that Ministers asked the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) to conduct an authoritative appraisal of the evidence on beta-interferon as part of its first appraisal programme.

The Department of Health adds: "We must stress that NICE has not yet issued any guidance on the use of beta-interferon in MS. As part of the appraisal process NICE circulated its Final Appraisal Determination (FAD) to patient groups, professional groups and manufacturers. All were given 10 days to appeal. NICE received eight appeals against the FAD. An appeal panel considered these appeals on 22 and 23 September 2000. Part of the appeals were upheld and as a result the NICE's Appraisal Committee reconsidered its guidance on 13 December 2000.

"During its appraisal of beta-interferon and a similar drug glatiramer acetate NICE has considered evidence that included economic models supplied by manufacturers and independent researchers, including data not previously submitted. These models are used to inform NICE's judgement on the cost effectiveness of beta-interferon and glatiramer acetate. The evidence relating to the cost effectiveness of these medicines is of critical importance to the NICE appraisal of these drugs. NICE has looked at these models and has concluded that detailed examination of these models has raised a number of issues that NICE's Appraisal Committee, using the information available, has been unable to resolve.

"After considering the deliberations of the Appraisal Committee NICE has decided to commission further economic modelling on beta-interferon and glatiramer acetate.

"NICE has advised that the commissioning, construction and evaluation of a further economic model will take some months. NICE is therefore extending the timescale of its appraisal of both beta-interferon and glatiramer acetate to enable further research to be undertaken on their cost effectiveness. NICE anticipates that the Appraisal Committee will reconsider the evidence (which will consist of the new model and any other new material available at the time) in July 2001. Unless there are further appeals, NICE expects to issue its guidance by November 2001.

"Until NICE issues its final guidance it would not be appropriate to pre-empt what it might say.

"In the meantime health authorities should have polices in place which provide for individual cases to be considered on their merits, in light of the evidence available on different forms of treatment.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 073/01 Tuesday 13 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOVERNMENT PLEDGES NEW CASH TO CLEAN UP CONTAMINATED LAND

New help to clean up contaminated land will soon be available to help tackle the blight of the past says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP who was speaking at Westminster on the last day of the Budget debate said the new "150% accelerated payable tax credit" will be a real help in bringing contaminated brownfield land back into use. The MP said: "In effect, this means the cost of cleaning up the land will not be met by the person who owns the land but by the Government - and there will be a 50% bonus thrown in."

The MP is in contact with Pendle Council for help in identifying local contaminated land sites with development potential.

The MP said: "Clearly everything depends on the proposed end use of the site. Contaminated land which is to be smothered in tarmac and used as a car park needs a lot less work than land earmarked for housing or something really sensitive such as a children's play area or hospital."

The MP added: "We cannot allow green field sites to be threatened when there are any number of brown field sites crying out for redevelopment."

"The Government wants to protect the green belt - as I do. But the best way of doing this is to get the brownfield sites back into use."

"We've all got to pull together on this one."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 074/01 Wednesday 14 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

UNEMPLOYMENT BELOW 1 MILLION FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1975

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, have hailed the latest jobless figures which reached a 'hugely significant' milestone by falling below 1 million for the first time since December 1975. The figure now stands at 996,200. The number of people in work is at an all time high at just over 28 million.

Locally, the number of people out of work in Pendle in February and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,475 - slightly up from 1,453 in January 2001. This represents an unemployment rate of 4.3%. There were 1,086 men and 389 women out of work.

Commenting on the figures the local MP said: "Pendle jobless figures have gone up just a little bit this month and we are still caught in the aftermath of the West Marton Dairy closure which had an effect on quite a number of people in Barnoldswick. As far as the national figure is concerned the Government's flagship New Deal has been a big factor in getting unemployment down below a million. The next phase of the New Deal will include more support for those who are hardest to help - those with basic skills problems or who have had problems with crime or addiction. £35 million will target those who are not quite ready for a job in the labour market and another £40 million will help people with disabilities into jobs."

The MP continued: "It seems incredible to think there was a time back in 1986 when unemployment, at its peak, stood at over 3 million. Even here in Pendle we regularly saw jobless figures well over 3000, month after month. We don't want to go down that road ever again."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 075/01 Monday 19 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

TACKLING WORLD POVERTY SHOULD BE A NEW CRUSADE says PENDLE MP

The developed world should make it a top priority of the new century to tackle world poverty.

Speaking at Westminster earlier today, the MP said it was in the interests of the developed countries themselves to help the underdeveloped world overcome their deep poverty. "It should be a new crusade for all of us."

Last year, the MP congratulated Pendle churches for their contribution to the Jubilee 2000 debt relief campaign. In December, he applauded the Government's initiative in wiping out the debt owed to the UK by 41 of the poorest nations in the world.

The MP said: "The Government will have increased the aid budget by 45 per cent in real terms between 1997 and 2003/04 and
refocused all of the UK's development effort on the reduction of extreme poverty. We have a commitment to provide 100 per cent relief for eligible countries committed to spending the proceeds on the poor and we have increased our support for education in developing countries, especially girls' education."

The MP added: "The UK is now making a huge contribution to the international effort to combat HIV/AIDS, spending over £250 million on this since 1997. That is a lot of money but more is needed. Africa is reeling from the AIDS pandemic. We've all got to help."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 076/01 Monday 19 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES MOVES TO GIVE PUBLIC A SAY ON SITING OF MOBILE PHONE MASTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed moves by the Government to increase the rights of the public to be consulted over the siting of mobile phone masts.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The siting of these masts can be hugely controversial and it is right that people have a say."

The Government has stuck to its line that the planning system cannot be used to consider health safeguards - but Ministers have indicated that forthcoming revised "planning policy guidance" will set out how councils should consider health issues.

The MP commented: "On the health issue, we must have one regime that applies to the entire country. For reasons that will be obvious to everyone, we cannot say one thing here in Pendle, for example, when our neighbours in Craven or Burnley or Ribble Valley are saying something completely different."

The MP added: “The sooner we get the new guidance the better.”

Note to Editors: The letter, dated 16 March, from Environment Minister, Nick Raynsford, to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, reads: “Last year I wrote to you to explain what the Government was doing to take forward the planning recommendations of the Stewart Report on Mobile Phones and Health. My letter explained that we would issue a consultation paper seeking views on the planning arrangements for telecommunications development That consultation took place last Summer, and I have today announced the changes we intend to make. The key changes are to:

• strengthen public consultation requirements on mast proposals of 15 metres and below so that they are exactly the same as applications for

more follows

planning permission.

• increase the time for authorities to deal with prior approval applications to 56 days

• increase application fees to enable local authorities to carry out full public consultation.

• underline that school governors must be consulted on all proposals for new masts on or near a school or college.

• a maintain in full an authority’s ability to reject applications on amenity grounds.

As you know, the Stewart Group conducted a rigorous and comprehensive assessment of existing research on mobile phone technology and gathered a wide range of views. Their report was published in May 2000. In respect of base stations, the report concluded that "the balance of evidence indicates that there is no general risk to the health of people living near to base stations on the basis that exposures are expected to be small fractions of the guidelines. However, there can be indirect adverse effects on their well-being in some cases". The Group recommended a precautionary approach, comprising a series of specific measures, to the use of mobile phone technologies until we have more detailed and scientifically robust information on any health effects,

In its initial response, published on 11 May 2000, the Government welcomed the Group's report and accepted many of its recommendations. In particular, the Government accepted the recommended precautionary approach as advised by the report. The Government’s response outlined the range of actions being taken forward in response to the report's specific recommendations and my statement sets out the current position. We shall continue to keep the whole area of mobile phone technology under review in the light of further research.

The Stewart Group's report that lack of public consultation is a major cause of grievance in people who suffer from loss of amenity when base stations are erected. It suggested that many feel excluded and disempowered by the current planning arrangements and that the resultant frustration can also have a negative effect on people's health and well being. For these reasons, the Group recommended changes to the planning arrangements.

I understand public concern about the siting of mobile phone masts. It is vital that masts are designed and sited sensitively so that their environmental impact is kept to a minimum and that local people are fully involved in that process. The new arrangements I have announced today respond to concerns about the level of public involvement. We shall require that the consultation arrangements for masts of 15 metres and below are exactly the same as for masts above that height, We shall also underline in our revised guidance that school governors must be consulted on all proposals for masts on or near schools and colleges.

To give local planning authorities more time to consult local people and consider their views we are increasing the period for authorities to decide

more follows

applications to a uniform 56 days. That's double the period they currently have to consider masts on buildings and 50% more than the existing period for ground-based masts. If an authority has made no decision within 56 days consent will be deemed to have been granted. In recognition of the extra work for local authorities we propose to increase the fee currently payable by developers from £35 to £190. That's more than a five-fold increase to give authorities the resources they need.

Deemed consent after 56 days is needed because many authorities are failing to meet their Best Value target to determine 80% of planning applications in 8 weeks. The 56 day period should be ample time for an authority to consult local people and to consider the merits of the application. As now, authorities will be able to turn down mast applications where they do not consider amenity aspects have been adequately addressed.

These changes represent a considerable strengthening of the current arrangements. We shall introduce them, and revised planning policy guidance, at the earliest opportunity. The guidance will underline our commitment to encouraging mast and site sharing, where that represents the best environmental solution, to minimise proliferation of masts. It will also emphasise the Government's view that telecommunications development must be taken forward through partnership between the operator, the local planning authority and the local community.

Our revised planning policy guidance will also set out how local planning authorities should consider health issues. It remains the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the appropriate mechanism for determining health safeguards. In the Government's view, if a proposed development meets international guidelines (the ICNIRP guidelines) it should not be necessary for a local planning authority, in processing an application, to consider the health aspects further.

Our new planning arrangements strike the right balance between improving consultation with local people, ensuring that the decision making process is not open-ended, and giving the 40 million people who use mobile phones the service they want."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 077/01 Tuesday 20 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE POLL TAX

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says the poll tax was such a monumental blunder by the Conservatives, its demise should be commemorated.

The controversial tax was abolished ten years ago tomorrow (21 March) and the Pendle MP has tabled a Commons motion to mark the event.

The motion, which will appear on the Commons Order Paper tomorrow (Wednesday), reads: “This House notes that the Poll Tax was abolished ten years ago on 21 March 1991 and that it was widely regarded as the most unfair and inequitable system of taxation devised since the Middle Ages; recalls that the rt hon member for Kensington (Michael Portillo), the Shadow Chancellor, was the minister for local government who brought in the Poll Tax in 1988 and that the rt hon member for Wokingham (John Redwood) was the man who dreamt the idea up as head of the Downing Street Policy Unit and considers the enthusiastic support given to the tax by the rt hon member for Richmond (William Hague) and the rt hon member for Maidstone and the Weald (Ann Widdecombe) to have been a significant error of judgement.”

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The Poll Tax had a devastating impact on Pendle. Ten years on, it is worth reminding ourselves what terrible damage it did in areas such as East Lancashire.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 078/01 Tuesday 20 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP GOES ARTISTIC IN TRAWDEN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be waxing lyrical at Trawden County Primary School this Friday 23 March. The school is holding a number of artistic events during these two weeks (19-30 March) and Mr Prentice will be speaking to some of the older children about his life as an MP.

Speaking from Westminster the MP said: “The school has a very exciting and ambitious programme taking place including a Circus Fudge Fun Day, a transglobal musical experience and a visit from the Dragonsmouth International Black Light Puppet Theatre. They will also have a chance to hear from local authors including ‘Thomas the Tank’ man Christopher Awdrey.”

There are also workshops on book making, pottery, tile-making, painting and story telling. Musically, the school will hear Manchester Camerata and Travelling by Tuba.

The MP continued: “This is a marvellous opportunity for the children to experience a mind-boggling array of art subjects. As well as being great entertainment the youngsters will undoubtedly learn a lot during this fortnight.”

He said: “I am really looking forward to talking to the children about life as an MP. Their views on my world can be very refreshing and I always get asked questions that wouldn’t come up in the Commons!”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 079/01 Tuesday 20 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP IN BID TO SAVE ELEPHANTS FROM FOOT AND MOUTH

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, sought an assurance in the Commons this afternoon that elephants and other zoo animals susceptible to foot and mouth would be protected. The MP quizzed Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, on what special measures were being put in place to protect the country’s zoo population.

The MP told MPs: “Foot and mouth disease affects cloven hoofed animals - the farm animals we are all familiar with. But others too can be hit such as the antelope. Indeed, animals such as the elephant can be struck down. What consideration is being given to the plight of the nation’s zoos? They are major visitor attractions and if this goes on for months some could be driven out of business.” The Minister said that decisions on opening or closing zoos would have to be guided by advice given locally.

Speaking after the exchange, the MP said: “Clearly, the livelihoods of our farmers and the plight of thousands of farm animals are at the forefront of our mind, but we should spare a thought for the creatures in our zoos who can be affected by this terrible contagion.”

Note to Editors: The following information is from the MAFF web-site:

Which other countries have recently had FMD? FMD is endemic in parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America, with sporadic outbreaks in disease-free areas. Countries affected by FMD in the past twelve months include Butan, Brazil, Columbia, Egypt, Georgia, Japan, Kazakhstan,

Korea, Kuwait, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Namibia, Russia, South Africa, Taipei, Tajikstan, Uruguay and Zambia, The last major outbreak of the disease in the EU was in Greece last year.

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MP IN BID TO SAVE ELEPHANTS FROM FOOT AND MOUTH

Which animals are susceptible? Cattle, sheep, pigs and goats are susceptible and some wild animal such as hedgehogs, coypu, rats, deer and zoo animals including elephants,

What are the symptoms? Vesicles (blisters) in the mouth or on the feet and other symptoms which vary somewhat but may be:

- **CATTLE -** Fever, dullness, off feed, shivering, reduced milk yield and sore teats in milking stock, slavering, tenderness of feet or lameness.
- **SHEEP AND GOATS -** Fever, lameness, stiff legged walk, off colour, tendency to lie down.
- **PIGS -** Fever, lameness, dullness, off feed.

What kinds of virus are there? There are 7 main types: 0, A, C, SAT.1, SAT.2, SAT.3, and Asia 1. Within each type there are many sub-types, e.g. 01 and A22. The average incubation period is 3-8 days but it can be shorter or may extend to 14 days or longer. It has been confirmed that the virus responsible for the present outbreak is the highly virulent pan-Asiatic 0 type. When animals recover from infection by one type of virus they have little or no protection against attacks by any one of the others.

How is the virus destroyed? It can be destroyed by heat, low humidity, or certain disinfectants, but it may remain active for a varying time in a suitable medium Such as the frozen or chilled carcass of an infected animal and on contaminated objects.

What are the effects of FMD? The disease is rarely fatal, except in the case of very young animals, which may die without showing any symptoms.

All affected animals lose condition and secondary bacterial infections may prolong convalescence. The most serious effects of the disease however are seen in dairy cattle. Loss of milk yield, abortion, sterility, chronic mastitis, and chronic lameness are commonplace.

Can FMD be cured? There is no cure. It usually runs its course in 2 or 3 weeks after which the great majority of animals recover naturally. The justification of the slaughter policy is that widespread disease throughout the country would be economically disastrous due to the effects already noted above.

http://www.maff,gov.uk/animalh/diseases/fmd/qal.htm

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 080/01 Wednesday 21 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE HITS £1.7 MILLION JACKPOT

Figures unearthed by local MP, Gordon Prentice, show Pendle has scooped over £1.7 million of lottery money in the last four years. The MP quizzed Culture Minister, Chris Smith, on arts initiatives that benefited his Pendle constituency.

Chris Smith told the MP that Pendle has benefited from 35 lottery awards totalling £1,716,879 from the National Lottery since 2 May 1997. The Minister said the awards included £220,605 to the Hospice Care for Burnley and Pendle - this project will build on current services for cancer patients by providing a 24-hour homecare service. It aims to give carers in the area support during the night. The lottery fund's 'Out of School Hours' childcare programme has awarded £27,000 to the Lakeview Children's Nursery - this grant will create 30 before and 30 after-school places, creating a total of 60 places for children aged 5-14 in a rural area of Lancashire. Ten primary schools within a five-mile radius will benefit from the scheme.

There were seventeen Millennium Award winners from Pendle whose schemes included tree planting and murals. Between them they have received grants totalling £25,218.

English Heritage grants offered since 1 May 1997 in the Pendle constituency include £40,000 for Higherford and £40,000 for Primet Bridge. There was also £68,000 for St Mary's, Nelson.

Lancashire Library Authority (which includes Pendle libraries) was part of a consortium which received an award of £215,992 to support reader development work in libraries.

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PENDLE HITS £1.7 MILLION JACKPOT

Development of the so-called 'creative industries' also features. The North West Heritage Trust, based in Barrowford, have secured funds to investigate the feasibility of creating artists studios, an exhibition outlet and support services within the Higherford Mill Development.

The MP said: "There are a huge amount of other initiatives that benefit us in Pendle. The money will make a real difference."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 081/01 Thursday 22 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP PRESENTS GRIMEWATCH AWARDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be presenting this years 'Grimewatch Environmental Awards' on Thursday 29 March at Ivy Bank High School, Burnley. The ceremony begins at 2.15pm.

A long standing campaigner on green issues, the MP said: "I am delighted to take part in this event. Making Lancashire a cleaner and better place to live should be something we all want to aim for. These projects have come from all different members of our community including schools, business and local authorities. There have also been entries from churches and women's institutes. It is marvellous to see that Pendle is so well represented in the short listed entries."

The competition is an initiative by the Lancashire Evening Telegraph who invited groups and individuals to submit entries. The projects had to raise awareness, change attitudes on environmental issues, stimulate action and reward projects from all sections of the community.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 082/01 Tuesday 27 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GUIDE DOGS TO GET A FARE DEAL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice will be meeting people from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association on Wednesday 28 March at Westminster. The meeting marks the introduction of Section 37 of the Disability Discrimination Act which comes into force on 31 March. Section 37 requires taxis to carry guide dogs and other assistance dogs and make no charge for this.

The MP is a keen supporter of the Association and has made his contribution to the 'Access for All' campaign by urging Pendle Borough Council to change the vehicle licence conditions - before they had to - to incorporate Section 37. Chief Executive, Stephen Barnes, told the MP he was reviewing the licensing conditions and the addition would be made to both the hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence conditions.

The MP said: "It was a ludicrous situation when guide dogs were being denied use of, or being charged, to accompany their owners in taxis. Accessible transport is vital for blind and partially sighted people to live their lives with independence, dignity and freedom."

Note to editor: Section 37 says: Private hire Vehicles must carry a guide dog or assistance dog belonging to a passenger, free of charge, unless the driver has a proven medical condition that would preclude such action. Drivers have a responsibility to ensure that their company is aware of such a condition when they are first employed.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 083/01 Tuesday 27 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

SOME PENDLE CANALSIDE RESTRICTIONS LIFTED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has been told by British Waterways that some sections of the Leeds to Liverpool canal are once again open to the public. Much of the country's 2,000 mile inland waterway network runs through farmland and rural areas and because of this there has been a blanket ban on access since 2 March 2001. However, in a letter to the MP, Stewart Sim, Operations Director for British Waterways, explained what they were doing to try to reopen as much of the waterway network as possible. In association with MAFF and the NFU, British Waterways are carrying out risk assessments to see which waterways can be reopened and under what conditions.

The MP was told that from Monday 26 March there will be daily announcements on which sections of the canal are now open again to navigation.

The MP said: "The Pendle section of the canal is open from Brierfield to Nelson. The bottom of Barrowford locks heading north to Barnoldswick is still closed. However the situation is rapidly changing and I recommend anyone who wants to keep up to date with the situation to either look on the British Waterways website (www.britishwaterways.co.uk.) or ring them on 01282 456978."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 084/01 Monday 25 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP MEETS AEROSPACE LOBBY

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing moves by the aerospace industry lobby group, Airline, to keep highly skilled jobs in Britain. The group claims the increasingly globalised nature of the industry is putting thousands of jobs at risk.

The meeting - held this afternoon in a committee room at the Commons - heard speakers from workers from leading firms such as BAe Systems and Rolls Royce, including John Boardman, the union convenor at RR in Barnoldswick.

Cllr Jack Harrison, the Chair of Airline, said: “Ten years after the group was founded, we see a buoyant world-class national industry that expects to grow further and to continue to outperform its rivals in the US. But this success is being bought at a price - through ongoing restructuring and job losses in the UK, transnational mergers and an endless pursuit of cost-cutting measures, including the increasing use of overseas suppliers.”

He added: “We are concerned about the plight of manufacturers and manufacturing employment and how local businesses will survive as the process of globalisation accelerates. As UK prime contractors look increasingly to a global supply market, we are likely to see jobs and technologies being transferred from the UK to other countries.”

Speaking after the meeting, the Pendle MP said: “The industry is going through a period of great change. The Government is putting large sums of money into the industry - RR got £250m in launch aid recently and £500 is going to Airbus - and I want to see that cash used to keep jobs here in the UK.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 085/01 Wednesday 4 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP GOES EUROPEAN IN NELSON

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining the children at St John Southworth RC Primary School this Friday 6 April at 1.15pm.
The MP was invited to the school as part of their European Week where every class is doing an activity associated with a different European country.

The MP said: "It is now accepted we are very much a part of the European Union. It is great the children are given the opportunity to learn more about the countries on their doorstep."

He continued: "I am looking forward to seeing what the children have done this week. I know they have been working hard and I am sure they will have learned a lot about their 'neighbours'. Knowing how particular children can be about food I will be especially interested to find out what European delicacies they have been tasting and what they thought of them!"

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 086/01 Tuesday 27 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP TO MEET AZAD KASHMIR PRIME MINISTER

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be meeting the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir tomorrow at a meeting in Westminster.

The MP has met the Prime Minister, Sultan Mehmood, on frequent occasions and had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Kashmir in depth during the MP's visit to Azad Kashmir and Pakistan in October 1999.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Kashmir is one a the great unresolved foreign policy issues confronting us. The UK has influence in the region and must press India to try to reach some kind of accommodation over the future of Kashmir."

The MP added: “Sadly, we in the UK cannot wave a magic wand to resolve this conflict which has been festering for 50 years. However, we can and must redouble our efforts in the search for a settlement.”

“The meeting tomorrow will also be useful in briefing MPs about the unfolding developments in Pakistan.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 087/01 Tuesday 27 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE BUSINESSES WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR RATE RELIEF IF HIT BY FOOT AND MOUTH CRISIS

The Government will underwrite 95 per cent. of local authority costs in offering discretionary hardship rate relief to businesses badly affected by foot and mouth disease. Pendle is one of 14 councils in the North West to be listed by the Government as an area eligible for help says local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Mercifully, Pendle has not, as yet, been hit directly by this dreadful disease and we are all keeping our fingers crossed. But businesses may be seriously affected indirectly. If things take a turn for the worst, I am sure Pendle Council will wish to adopt the scheme.”

Yesterday, Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, told the House: “Any type of businesses with a rateable value of £12,000 or less in rural local authority districts which adopt the scheme, will be eligible for a reduction of up to £1,290 for a three month period, provided they can show that they have suffered serious economic loss through the impact of foot and mouth disease. For some businesses this could amount to all of their rate bill for the period in question. The scheme will allow impacts beyond three months to be kept under review.”

The Minister added: “Businesses with properties above £12,000 rateable value affected by foot and mouth disease will be eligible to benefit from existing local authority hardship relief provisions in which Government meet 75 per of the cost.”

There are 8 confirmed cases of foot and mouth in Lancashire.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 088/01 Monday 2 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP APPLAUDS ELECTION DELAY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has applauded Tony Blair's decision, announced in Parliament today, to delay the county council elections due on May 3 until June 7. It is widely expected that the Prime Minister will also call the General Election on the same day.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I called publicly three weeks ago for the local elections to be put back if the country was still grappling with the foot and mouth outbreak. The first priority is to get foot and mouth well and truly under control and the Government is sparing no effort to defeat this dreadful contagion."

"The countryside also depends on tourism and lots of businesses will be affected adversely the longer people stay away."

"The Prime Minister has got it right. No-one could be expected to conduct an election campaign against a backdrop of burning carcasses."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 089/01 Monday 2 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP URGES GOVERNMENT TO BOOST TAKE UP OF PENSIONERS' MINIMUM INCOME GUARANTEE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has quizzed Pensions Minister, Jeff Rooker, on the take up of the new "Minimum Income Guarantee" for pensioners.

Speaking in the Commons this afternoon during Social Security questions, the MP praised the huge amount the Government had done for pensioners but he expressed concern about the rumoured 500,000 pensioners entitled to the MIG but yet to take it up.

Earlier, the Social Security Minister, Alistair Darling had told the Commons that in an effort to boost take up the claim form for MIG had been reduced from 40 pages to 10.

The Pendle MP responded: "Despite a big advertising campaign and letters from the Department going to over 2.4 million pensioners there are still pensioners out there who would qualify for MIG. Why can't we make MIG universal for all over 80s, say, and recoup the money from those who don't need it through the tax system?"

Jeff Rooker said the 500,000 figure was an extrapolation from a 5% sample and could not be relied upon. As a result of the Government's campaign an additional 90,000 pensioners were not getting MIG who were not getting it before. From April 2001 the Minimum Income Guarantee for single pensioners aged 60-74 goes up by £13.70 to £92.15. Couples will get £140.55 that's £18.75 more for pensioners aged 60-74.

Note to Editors: Today's Pensioners: From April 2001 the Basic State Pension goes up by £5 a week for a single pensioner to £72.50 and by £8 for

more follows

PENDLE MP URGES GOVERNMENT TO BOOST TAKE UP OF PENSIONERS' MINIMUM INCOME GUARANTEE

a pensioner couple to £115.90 that's more than the rise in earnings... ... and from April 2002 the single person's pension goes up by a further £3 a week and £4.80 more for pensioner couples,

From April 2001 the lower rates of the Minimum Income Guarantee will be aligned with the higher rates and these will be raised beyond earnings. That means that for single pensioners aged 60-74 the MIG goes up by £13.70 to £92.15 - that's more than the minimum of £90 Age Concern and the Social Security Select Committee have said pensioners need to live on, Couples will get £140.55 that's £18.75 more for pensioners aged 60-74.

The MIG capital limits will also be raised from April 2001 for the first time since 1990. Until now your entitlement to MIG starts to be reduced if you have £3,000 of savings and goes altogether if your savings exceed £8,000. We are raising the lower limit to £6,000 and the higher limit to £12,000.

From 2003 the Government will introduce a new Pension Credit.
• The minimum guaranteed income will be retained so that no pensioner need be getting less than the decent minimum they need to live on. it will be fixed at £100 for a single pensioner and £154 for pensioner couples
• On top of that, people who have saved to get a small or moderate income in addition to their basic state pension will be rewarded with a top-up payment from the state.
• The old capital rules will be abolished. Eligibility for the Pension Credit will be determined by the size of your income, not your savings.

• Weekly means tests will go. Assessment of pensioner's incomes will become more like those done under the tax system.

The Pension Credit will ensure that people are rewarded, not penalised, for saving. The Government expect it will benefit all single pensioners with incomes up to £135 a week and all pensioner couples with incomes up to £200.

From 2003 the age related income tax allowance, which helps to take pensioners out of income tax, will be raised by £240 above indexation.

Tomorrow's Pensioners: Stakeholder Pensions go live on 6 April 2001. They are a new type of funded pension - flexible, low cost and providing better options for middle earners who do not have access to a good occupational scheme.

The State Second Pension will be introduced from 2002 It is specifically aimed at lower earners, giving them a better deal than SERPS and ensuring that after a full working life they can retire on an income above means tested benefits.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 090/01 Tuesday 3 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS NEW BLITZ ON SOCIAL SECURITY FRAUD

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new drive to cut social security fraud. The Government estimates that fraud in social security costs the taxpayer at least £2 billion a year - a sum of money the MP describes as "wholly unacceptable".

The MP was speaking at Westminster today as the Social Security Fraud Bill went into Committee for line by line scrutiny. The MP - a member of the Committee - says the Government has made a public commitment to reduce fraud and error in Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance by 25% by March 2004 and 50% by March 2006. The most recently published research on these two benefits estimate losses through fraud and error to be in the region of £1.32 billion - or 8.4% of programme expenditure.

The MP said: "Fraud concerns everyone. Some people are ripping off the system and we are determined to tackle it. At any one time around 120,000 people are fraudulently working and claiming benefit."

"The Bill will allow for the sharing of information between public and private sector organisation - with proper safeguards. For example, if someone is fraudulently

claiming housing benefit for a property but no gas or electricity is being used then it's a fair bet the property is unoccupied."

"The figures for fraud always seem huge. But that's because the Government pays out a whopping £2 billion in benefits every week. The fight against fraud is never ending. We've just got to make it more and more difficult to get away with it. The Bill has new powers to reduce or withdraw benefit entirely."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 091/01 Tuesday 3 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP UNVEILS "VITAL STATISTICS" OF LOCAL NHS

A fascinating insight into the work of the local NHS in East Lancashire has been unveiled by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice who has been examining the area's vital statistics.

In 1996/7, under the previous Government, East Lancashire Health Authority received funding of only £230.8 million - a real terms increase of just 0.5% on the previous year. That has been boosted to £416.7 million by 2001/2 - a real terms rise of 6.4% from last year.

The MP pledges NHS spending will be boosted by a third in real terms by 2004, "meaning a bigger, better NHS for the people of Pendle".

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Having put the money and the building blocks in place, in July 2000 we set out our long-term strategy to build a modern NHS. Our ten year NHS Plan aims not only to expand the capacity of the NHS and modernise working practices but to create an NHS centred around the patient's needs."

"In March 1998 15,339 people were waiting for treatment in East Lancashire Health Authority. Waiting lists by January 2001 have been cut to 12,450 - a fall of 2,889 (or 18.8%)."

The MP added: "I recognise there is still much more to do. That is why the Government will reduce waiting times so that by 2005 no patient will have to wait more than six months for hospital admission. And waiting lists for outpatient appointments will be abolished and replaced with a booking system so that people in

Pendle can book a hospital appointment that is convenient for them. By the end of 2005, we expect the average waiting time for an outpatient appointment to fall to five weeks."

"We have also seen more operations than ever before. 1,992,419 operations were carried out in the North West region in 2000 as against only 1,903,194 in 1997. There was an increase of 14.4% in the number of people admitted for a day case operation in 2000 compared to 1997."

Last year, in the East Lancashire Health Authority, there were:

• 2,340 NHS cataract operations (the private sector charges £1,800 - £2,400 a time for this)

• 715 NHS hernia operations (the private sector charges £1,000 - £1,500 a time for this)

• 526 NHS hip replacement operations (the private sector charges £5,000 - £7,800 a time for this)

• 270 NHS knee replacement operations (the private sector charges £5,700 - £8,400 a time for this)

• 192 NHS ingrown toe nail operations

• 288 NHS sebaceous cyst operations

"The Conservatives want some so-called minor operations carried out by the private sector. I disagree. The previous Government left the NHS short-staffed. Nationally, during the early to mid 1990s, nurse training places were cut by 25%, and GP training numbers fell by more than 20%, costing the NHS more than 700 family doctors. Since 1997 we have turned the corner on NHS staff recruitment. In the North West there are 2,577 more nurses working in the NHS compared to 1997."

The MP added: "The number of doctors in East Lancashire Health Authority has risen by 91 since September 1997. There are 13 more consultants working in the NHS in East Lancashire Health Authority now than there were under the previous Government."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 092/01 Wednesday 4 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP IN TALKS WITH PAKISTAN MINISTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

Pakistan is making huge efforts to modernise its institutions and root out corruption according to Shahida Jamil, the Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights.

During a flying visit to London, the Minister today told Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, the country's institutions had been massively over-staffed and "robbed of their capacity to deliver services efficiently". She said the Government was now committed to a "National Agenda for Good Governance".

In a blunt assessment of the situation in Pakistan she said the justice system needed a complete overhaul with thousands of people awaiting trial and languishing in jail for periods longer than the sentences that could be imposed if they were found guilty. She also told the MP police corruption was a problem and was to be tackled with vigour.

Speaking after the meeting which included the Pakistan High Commissioner, Abdul Kader Jaffer, the MP said: "The Minister certainly has her hands full in tacking the problems that beset Pakistan. She also realises the importance of returning the country to democratic government. Some of the changes, though, are encouraging. For example, 33% of all the local government seats have been allocated to women. Almost 44,000 women will be taking their seats in the local councils by 14 August this year."

The Pendle MP is a member of the All Party Pakistan Group and takes a close interest in developments there.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 093/01 Wednesday 4 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS MOVE ON EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is supporting a new Bill to give employees in firms which employ more than fifty people, the right to be consulted on large business issues which directly affect employees.

The Private Member's Bill, to be introduced this Friday by Luton North MP, Kelvin Hopkins, would require employers to inform and consult the workforce on the "situation, structure and reasonably foreseeable developments relating to employment within the undertaking including potential redundancy and measures such as training and skill development".

The Pendle MP commented: "I believe people have a right to be consulted if there are likely to be significant changes in the work they do."

The Bill stands next to no chance of becoming law.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 094/01 Wednesday 4 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CHILDREN'S TAX CREDIT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the introduction of the new Children's Tax Credit which comes into effect on 6 April 2001. He says it will benefit around 5 million families.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “It is a family tax cut worth up to £520 a year. A family who have at least one child under 16 living with them is eligible. To benefit from the Children's Tax Credit, all a family has to do is to fill in a straightforward application form and return it to the Inland Revenue.”

“Millions of families have already applied for their CTC but there are still thousands more - including people here in Pendle - who are eligible and can benefit.”

“I want to make sure that all eligible families get the tax cut to which they are entitled. There is a help line on 0845 300 1036 or people can contact their tax office.”

The MP added: “This tax credit is up and running now. The so called “baby tax credit” mentioned by the Chancellor in the Budget comes in from 6 April 2002 and will be worth up to £1,040 in the year a child is born.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 095/01 Monday 9 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR “REGISTER OF ROYAL BUSINESS INTERESTS”

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for a new “Register of Royal Business Interests”.

Backed by scores of Labour MPs, the MP has tabled a Commons motion on the “Business Affairs of Working Members of the Royal Family” which will appear in the Order Paper tomorrow ((Tuesday 10 April). The move is backed by MPs from across the political spectrum and was prompted by the involvement of the Countess of Wessex with the “fake sheikh”.

Note to Editors: The motion reads: “That this House applauds the decision of Buckingham Palace to consider issuing guidance on how the business affairs of working members of the royal family might be conducted in future; believes a

register of royal interests, along the lines of the House of Commons Register of Members' Interests should be considered; hopes the Palace will invite the views of Rt Hon and hon Members on any draft guidance; and invites the Select Committee on Public Administration to review current practice and offer suggestions for change where it considers appropriate."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 096/01 Monday 9 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR CRACKDOWN ON FARMERS BREAKING FOOT AND MOUTH RULES

A call for a tough crack down on farmers knowingly breaking the foot and mouth rules was made in the Commons today.

Outspoken Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, claimed some farmers were irresponsibly moving livestock about without proper authority.

The MP told Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, during a Commons Statement on the latest developments in the foot and mouth outbreak that it "beggared belief that some farmers were making unauthorised movements of livestock - seven weeks into the contagion - which could spread the disease". The MP wanted to know what sanctions were available to crack down on farmers breaking the rules.

The Minister told the House that prosecutions were being taken. He said the vast majority of farmers were behaving responsibly.

After the Commons exchange, the Pendle MP said: "We are all in this together. The rules on the movement of livestock are there for a purpose. We know it's hard on the farmers but we've got to take a blow torch to this disease or it will destroy everything."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 097/01 Monday 9 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP MAKES PLEA FOR MORE WPCs FROM ASIAN BACKGROUND

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, made a plea in the Commons this afternoon for more women police officers from Asian backgrounds.

During Home Office questions, the Pendle MP told Home Secretary, Jack Straw, there were only 596 women police officers drawn from the ethnic minorities out of a total number of 124,000 police in England and Wales. Overall, there are 2,915 ethnic minority officers.

The MP said most were likely to be black women with "only a handful" from Asian backgrounds. He wanted greater efforts made to recruit British Asian women into the police service. He told Straw: "We need gender targets for black and Asian officers."

The Home Secretary told the MP there were cultural reasons why many Asian background women did not join the uniformed services but said the Government was working hard to increase representation.

Speaking afterwards, Gordon Prentice said: "It is in everyone's interests to have a police service that looks like the community it serves. It is going to be hard work but we've got to persuade young British Asian women that a career in the police is rewarding and worthwhile."

The MP added: "I know my own force is Lancashire is desperately anxious to recruit women from the ethnic minorities into the service. They are bending over backwards to attract such women."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 098/01 Wednesday 11 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CLEANER NHS HOSPITALS

The Government has published the outcome of the first part of the national hospital clean-up campaign. The results of hundreds of independent, unannounced inspections demonstrate a marked improvement in cleaning standards across the NHS. The number of hospitals where standards are deemed to be poor has dropped from 253 in the autumn to 42 now - of which only about 10 are in need of special measures. Hospitals are colour coded and ranked green (for excellent), yellow (acceptable) and red (poor).

Burnley General and Pendle Community Hospital were rated green in both inspections. Airedale Hospital - which takes patients from
West Craven - ranked yellow in both.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: “The Government is determined to get the fundamentals of care right in every NHS hospital. We want to make sure the wards are clean, the food is good, the care is there for all NHS patients.”

The government's hospital clean-up drive - announced in the NHS Plan last July - was underpinned by the allocation of £30m to raise standards of cleanliness in 700 NHS hospitals and a series of unannounced inspections.

All hospitals will share in a further £30 million which will be fast tracked directly to them. The cash will be available to trusts before the end of the month.

Those hospitals with the biggest problems will now have extra resources of between £250,000 and £750,000 for cleaning, with a team of experts to assist in their clean-up campaign. These

more follows

hospitals will have until the Autumn to raise cleaning standards.

From next April 500 Matrons will be back on the wards to ensure these standards are met and maintained - with the power to halt payments to private cleaning contractors where they fail to keep hospital cleanliness up to scratch.

Last autumn, following the publication of the NHS Plan, all hospitals were inspected by specialist teams, including patient representatives and infection-control nurses, to establish their state of cleanliness. The results showed: Poor standards in 253 (35.5%) hospitals and acceptable or higher standards in 460 (64.5%). Latest figures show that by March 2001 hospitals ranked:
as poor 42 (6%) and acceptable or higher standards 647 (94%).

This is the first time the cleanliness information has been made publicly available. 27 hospitals moved from a red rating of poor to a high rating of green in the few months since the clean up campaign began.

The Pendle MP added: “Despite this marked improvement, there is to be no let up in our drive to raise standards of hospital cleanliness. The fundamentals of care are too important to be left to chance.”
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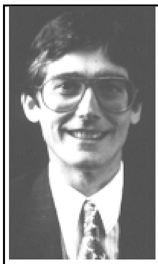

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 099/01   Wednesday 11 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE UNEMPLOYMENT STABLE

The number of people out of work in Pendle in March and claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance stood at 1,439 - slightly down from 1,475 in February 2001. This represents an unemployment rate of 4.2%. There were 1,069 men and 370 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count has again fallen and now stands at 995,200. Employment now stands at a record 28,090,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “Pendle jobless figures have fallen slightly this month as did the national figure. However, we will have to wait and see what effect the foot and mouth crisis has on numbers over the coming months. The government has today launched the Rural Skills Action to provide support for anyone whose job is affected by the outbreak.”

“Thankfully, Pendle has not, as yet, been hit directly by this dreadful disease and we are all keeping our fingers crossed.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 100/01 Wednesday 11 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BEREAVEMENT PAYMENT DOUBLES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the increases to most Social Security benefits this week. As from 9 April there are above inflation rises and help to carers, people who are severely disabled and pensioners amongst others.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "For the first time, men as well as women will be able to receive financial help after the death of their spouse. This sees a big increase from £1,000 to £2,000 and will come as a great help to people at a very distressing time. The Widowed Parents' Allowance will now help mothers and fathers with the cost of bringing up their children until they leave school or sixth-form college."

"I am especially pleased there is now more help for carers and the most severely disabled. The Carer Premium will increase by £10 over and above inflation to £24.40. The Enhanced Disability Premium will increase by £5 for single people including children) and £7.25 for couples."

The MP continued: "These increases will be a big help for many people in Pendle. At least 3,000 of our least well-off pensioners will gain from the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), increased to £92.15 for all single pensioners and £140.55 for couples. For pensioners with a bit of money the lower capital limit in MIG is doubled from £3,000 to £6,000."

The MP concluded: "The governments objective is to ensure that pensioners get their fair share, with more help for those on low and modest incomes. There are plans in the pipe line for a new Pension credit due to be introduced in 2003 which will provide additional help to those who have saved. But our priority must and should be to get extra help to those who need it now."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 101/01 Wednesday 11 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP AT OPENING OF BRIERFIELD PEACE GARDEN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be attending the official opening of the Brierfield Peace Garden this Thursday 10 April at 2.00pm. The site is in front of Brierfield Youth Centre, Colne Road, Brierfield and the work has been carried out in the main by young people from the centre.

The project has been supported and co-ordinated by Groundwork East Lancashire, Mid-Pennine Arts and Lancashire Youth and Community Service, and was developed in response to growing social tensions in the Brierfield area. The project has helped to provide a focus for a number of youths in the area.

The MP said: “The garden will be a small haven in the town centre where people can sit and appreciate their surroundings. This is a positive move for the young people of Brierfield in a bid to encourage better relationships within the community.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 074/01 Wednesday 14 March 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE UNEMPLOYMENT STABLE

The number of people out of work in Pendle in March and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,439 - slightly down from 1,475 in February 2001. This represents an unemployment rate of 4.2%. There were 1,069 men and 370 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count has again fallen and now stands at 995,200. Employment now stands at a record 28,090,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Pendle jobless figures have fallen slightly this month as did the national figure. However, we will have to wait and see what effect the foot and mouth crisis has on numbers over the coming months. The government has today launched the Rural Skills Action to provide support for anyone whose job is affected by the outbreak."

"Thankfully, Pendle has not, as yet, been hit directly by this dreadful disease and we are all keeping our fingers crossed."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 103/01 Wednesday 18 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP WELCOMES CAMPAIGN TO STAMP OUT 'SILENT KILLER'

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new campaign designed to highlight the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning. The campaign is being run by British Gas and aims to make people aware of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The MP said: "Carbon monoxide leaking from flues or appliances is a real danger as it can't be seen and has no smell. Every year around 50 people are killed and people will still remember the tragic death of a young couple in Nelson in 1998 who died from this silent killer."

Carbon monoxide can leak from any appliance using gas, coal, wood or oil and poor servicing or installation of heaters, inadequate ventilation or blocked flues are frequently to blame. The symptoms of poisoning can be headaches, nausea, vomiting and general listlessness and can be mistaken for flu. In an emergency you can ring Transco on 0800 111999

The MP said: “Simple measures can be taken to avoid tragedy occurring such as regular maintenance and knowing how this poisonous gas affects people could prevent deaths from happening.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 104/01 Wednesday 18 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NEW DENTIST BRIDGES A GAP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, cracked a smile when he heard the news of a new dental practice opening in Barnoldswick. Planning permission has been granted for the practice in Skipton Road and Mr Evans, who also has practice in Wigan, plans to open the doors in July.

The MP, who lives in Barnoldswick, said: “A new dentist in Pendle is great news. I have been pressing the Health Minister for extra dental provision for all of Pendle and we need cover for the whole of the area, from West Craven through to Brierfield.

The MP has long campaigned for improved dental care in Pendle. He said: “Dental health in East Lancashire is amongst the worst in the country. The Government is pouring millions of pounds into NHS dentistry but people in Pendle are still having problems in finding a dentist.”

The problem of bad teeth was recently highlighted in a document produced by Pendle Partnership. The report noted that the number of 5 year olds with decayed, missing or filled teeth (1995-1996) was 4.1. The objective was to bring this figure down to the Borough average of 2.41. East Lancashire Health Authority, along with Sure Start Pendle and Pendle Primary Care Group have been looking at provision for an extra dentist in Nelson.

The MP said: “The White Paper on Access to NHS Dentistry sets challenging targets to make sure everyone who needs an NHS dentist can get one. The Government is offering incentives to encourage dentists to work in areas like Pendle which are presently poorly served.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 105/01 Monday 23 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MS AWARENESS WEEK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing the local branch of the MS Society as it gears up for another round of activities to mark “MS Awareness Week”. The MP is Secretary of the All Party MS Group and also Honorary President of the local branch of the MS Society.

The MP said: “Multiple Sclerosis is a disease that can affect people of any age, but too often it strikes the young. This campaign is to give the general public a better understanding of the condition and to raise much needed funds for research. We are all hoping for a breakthrough.”

Last month the MP told the Spring meeting of the Lancashire, Greater Manchester and South Cumbria region of the MS Society that new drugs to help those with the condition must be made available to all who can benefit from them.

He told the meeting in Oldham there was “absolutely no possibility” of some people being denied beta interferon by the NHS in future while others continued to receive it. At present the drug is being evaluated by NICE (the National Institute of Clinical Excellence). Guidance is expected to be issued by November 2001.

The MP believes that beta-interferon and other drugs can help patients with the relapsing-remitting form of Multiple Sclerosis and also those with the secondary progressive form of the disease.
He said: “These new drugs cost money but that is why we have a nationwide system of social insurance - to protect all of us from what may be around the corner. There are almost 60 million of us in the UK but only 85,000 with MS.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 106/01 Tuesday 24 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ROCKING ROUND THE CLOCK FOR WALTON NURSERY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be cutting the ribbon at the official opening of the Rocking Horse Club at Walton Lane Nursery School, Walton Lane, Nelson this Friday 27 April at 11.00am. The MP will also countdown the launch of the children's balloon race.

The Rocking Horse Club provides out-of-hours care for children and the sessions run from early in the morning, dinner time and after school. The scheme has been running as a pilot for 6 months.

The MP said: "The Government is committed to providing good quality child care and since 1997 has provided an extra 125,000 free early years education places for 3 and 4 year olds."

In a letter to the MP last month the Education Minister, Margaret Hodge, said there will be a £15 million programme over three years to encourage maintained nursery schools to continue to develop and extend traditional nursery school services such as out-of-school care. There will be an additional 100,000 new full-time nursery places.

The MP said: "Over the last 12 months we have had 87 new childcare places and 60 pre-school and more in the pipeline."

He concluded: "Good quality child care is essential for working parents. Walton Lane has the facilities and the staff to provide a safe and secure environment for the children. And they get a great start to their education."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 107/01 Tuesday 24 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NEWTOWN NURSERY YOUNG AT HEART AFTER 50 YEARS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining the staff and children at Newtown Nursery, Colne this Saturday 28 April to celebrate 50 years to the day since the nursery opened. There will be a cake cutting ceremony at 12.00pm

The anniversary will not only celebrate the nursery's achievements of half a century but will look to the future. The school has plans for a revamped building where local parents will be able to come along and learn with their children.

The MP said: "Newtown Nursery has made an important contribution to the local community and is held with great affection by everyone who went there. The school's new initiative to involve both adults and children in the learning process is a great idea."

The alterations to the building will begin in the next few months and the funding of £12,000 has come from the Department of Education via Lancashire County Council.

The MP said: "I know the staff and children are looking forward to their new facilities. Newtown Nursery is still young at heart after 50 years."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 108/01 Tuesday 24 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP QUIZZES PENDLE MARKET RESEARCH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be dropping in at Pendle Market Research, 108 Scotland Road, Nelson this Friday 27 April at 1.30pm to say hello and find out more about the work they do.

Pendle Market Research is an 'intermediate labour market project' specialising in social research mainly in the Pendle area. The MP will be chatting to some of the young people who are taking part in the project.

The MP said: "This is an innovative project to help people find work. The project can provide training and encouragement to individuals who have experienced long term unemployment."

The training includes job search skills, CV writing, information technology and interview techniques.

The MP said: "The job market is always changing and people need to learn new skills they may not have had in the past. Along with the Government's New Deal project, young people in Pendle are getting help with their employment needs."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 109/01 Wednesday 25 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CAUGHT ON CAMERA IN NELSON

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be opening the Nelson CCTV Scheme this Friday 27 April at 2.30pm at Nelson Town Hall.

The MP has long supported the call for cameras in Pendle and was delighted when the news came through in January 2000 that the area had been successful in a bid for funding for the scheme.

The MP said: “This is great news for Nelson, both local business and the general public have been crying out for these cameras. Brierfield has had this technology for a couple of years and it has already proved to be a success in catching criminals. CCTV is not a substitute for police on the beat but the two together will make law breakers think twice.”

The MP continued: “Despite what the Doubting Thomas’s have said CCTV makes a real difference. I want to see other areas of Pendle benefit.”

The positive message that the Government is committed to tackling crime was reinforced this week following the announcement that nationally there are 2,800 more police recruits this year than last. In Lancashire recruits are up from 87 in 1999/00 to 164 in 2000/01.

Gordon Prentice said: “Police numbers are important, just as the new and rapidly improving technology we have to catch criminals. But I still want to see more officers back on the beat.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 110/01 Wednesday 25 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MOBILE NHS DENTIST ON THE CARDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a bid by East Lancashire Health Authority (ELHA) for a mobile dental service. The proposed scheme will provide dental services in a traditional surgery setting and also a mobile surgery covering Barnoldswick, Earby and Trawden.

The MP, who lives in Barnoldswick, said: “This is a brilliant idea. Pendle has been crying out for more NHS dentists and the idea of a mobile surgery is inspired.”

He continued: “Many people struggle to get into their nearest town and a mobile surgery will travel around the largely rural areas of Pendle bringing a dentist to the doorsteps.”

The surgery would be based at Barnoldswick Community Dental Clinic, which has not been used for some years and will be refurbished. The ELHA will be submitting full details of the scheme to the Department of health by the middle of May.

The MP said: "It is smiles all round at the moment, last week we had the news of a new dentist in Barnoldswick. Planning permission has been granted for the practice in Skipton Road and Mr Evans, who also has a practice in Wigan, plans to open the doors in July. The new ELHA proposal offers the best solution to the problem of people in the rural community finding dental care."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 040 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 111/01 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

HEALTH SHAKE UP PLANNED TO SHIFT £100m TO NHS FRONT LINE SERVICES

The Government today launched the NHS Modernisation Agency - a new body with a brief to ensure operational control passes outwards and downwards to the NHS front-line.

Speaking from Westminster, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "I have always believed that health services should be delivered as locally as possible - consistent with the over-riding need to provide first rate clinical care. Clearly, some specialisms require big catchment areas. We need to see the details of how this may impact on East Lancashire."

The Government believes the NHS cannot be run from Whitehall. Instead more power and resources will be devolved to the NHS front-line so that local decisions carry more weight, local people benefit from improved local health services. Front-line staff will have greater control over more resources to shape services in the interests of patients. The Government says those responsible for providing local services need the freedom to shape them in the way they see fit within clear national standards and greater local accountability. This will require a number of major structural changes.

Too many family doctors and community nurses have felt disempowered rather than empowered. There are similar feelings in NHS Trusts. Many chief executives complain of too much day to day intrusion - from health authorities, regional offices an from the Department of Health. For too many at the NHS front-line too much of the NHS today still feels like a centrally run bureaucracy.

more follows

HEALTH SHAKE UP PLANNED

By 2004 two thirds of the 99 English health authorities will have disappeared as they merge. About 30 Strategic Health Authorities will be put in place covering an average 1.5 million population - broadly corresponding to new clinical networks such as those for cancer services. Many of their functions will be devolved to Primary Care Trusts.

These reforms will free up at least £100 million from bureaucracy for investment in front-line services. This new flatter management structure will help liberate local services to get on with the business of reform. By 2004 family doctors and practice nurses will be in control of 75% of the NHS budget.

When the present Government came to office GP fund holders controlled just 15% of the NHS budget. Today Primary Care Groups and Primary Care Trusts control over 50%. By 2004 it will be 75%. The 30 strategic health authorities which remain will each cover an average population of 1.5 million.

This broadly corresponds to emerging clinical networks such as those for cancer services. Local consultation will shape their exact boundaries. Local services will be unaffected by this change.

There will be greater local control over local services.

Many of the old health authority functions will be devolved to locally-run Primary Care Trusts. They will be the first point of contact with local government to develop more joint working. More of the planning to improve services and tackle health inequality will also take place at this local level.

The new Strategic Health Authorities will be the bridge between the Department of Health and local NHS services. They will be responsible for brokering solutions to local problems, holding local health services to account and encouraging greater autonomy for NHS Trusts and PCTs.

Health authorities will have responsibility devolved to them from NHS regional offices for performance managing the local health care system. Although both NHS Trusts and PCTs will be accountable to the new strategic health authorities both will have greater operational freedom.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 112/01 Thursday 26 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SAYS PEOPLE'S PEERS "TOTALLY UNREPRESENTATIVE OF BRITAIN TODAY"

The 15 new "people's peers" announced by the House of Lords Appointments Commission today are totally unrepresentative of the UK population says Pendle Labour MP, Gordon Prentice. He says the term "people's peer" is a misnomer and ought to be abandoned. The new peers include 7 knights and 3 professors.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Ministers have told me that the whole object of people's peers exercise was "to increase the extent to which the House of Lords was representative of the UK as a whole". If you believe that, then you believe pigs fly."

"Last year, the House of Lords Appointments Commission went out on four regional road shows to drum up interest and encourage people to apply for a peerage. The Commission could have saved itself and others time and money by staying in London and consulting the latest edition of Who's Who for suitable candidates."

The MP added: "I have been pressing for months for applicants turned down for a people's peerage to be told the reason for their rejection - if that's what they want. I made no headway and now I know why. This list of eminent, high achieving people is no different from earlier lists of the great and the good who have been elevated to the peerage."

"The Government has lost its way on Lords reform. I want to see a small directly elected Upper Chamber, with strictly defined powers, and with the Commons retaining its primacy. Why not?"

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 114/01 Friday 4 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CONGRATULATES GISBURN ROAD PRIMARY ON WINNING "INVESTORS IN PEOPLE" AWARD

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has congratulated everyone at Gisburn Road Primary school in Barnoldswick for winning the prestigious "Investors in People" award.

The MP, who lives in the town, told the staff and children at the awards ceremony at the school today they should be proud of their achievement. "Only a handful of schools in Pendle have this award. The head teacher, Mrs June Banks and all the staff deserve a huge pat on the back. It is splendid."

The award was made by Mark Price the Chief Executive of ELTEC - the training and enterprise organisation whose responsibilities have now been transferred to the new Learning and Skills Council.

The school will now fly an "Investors in People" flag. A plaque will also be put up.

The award lasts for three years.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 115/01 Monday 30 April 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

VILLAGE SHOPS TO GET 50% RATE RELIEF

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed new legislation - to be debated in Parliament today - which will give village shops 50% rate relief.

The 50% relief is currently only available to the sole village general store and post office but the new Bill extends the relief to all village shops that sell mainly food for human consumption.

The Rating (Former Agricultural Premises and Rural Shops) Bill fulfils commitments from the Rural White Paper as well as helping businesses affected by foot and mouth. It is part of a wide package of measures to help revive rural communities.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Government's first and over-riding priority is to eradicate foot and mouth disease. We are spending in excess of £500m to aid farmers and more than £200m of additional support for the rural economy. Measures introduced already include - hardship rate relief, deferment of rates payments, temporary reductions in rateable values, and deferral of the rate appeals deadline. Farms are of course already fully exempt from non-domestic rates - but this Bill will ensure that barriers to diversification are removed."

The MP added: "Foot and mouth has come as a hammer blow to farmers and to the tourism industry. But its impact is rippling right through the economy. The Government is giving as much help as it can."

In the Rural White Paper the Government confirmed it would extend the mandatory rate relief to other food shops, pubs and petrol stations in small villages. This measure took effect from 5

more follows

VILLAGE SHOPS TO GET 50% RATE RELIEF

April 2001. It is estimated that there are about 8,000 pubs and nearly 2,000 petrol filling stations with rateable values of less than £9,000.

Note to Editors: Five years 50% mandatory rate relief (which local authorities will be able to increase to 100%) for small enterprises (initially below a rateable value of £6000) which are newly established in former agricultural premises, including cases where the farmer lets or sells the property to a third party.

Former agricultural premises converted for small-scale bed and breakfasts and similar businesses and not qualifying for the existing rating exemption will be eligible for this new rate relief.

Supporting Village shops - sustaining small villages

The Government introduced the village shop rate relief scheme in 1998, providing 50% mandatory rate relief to small general stores and post offices where they are the sole outlets in small villages (population below 3000) at the same time giving local authorities powers to grant discretionary relief of up to 100% to other small businesses.

This Bill will extend mandatory relief to all village food shops - an estimated 3,000 food shops in rural parishes with fewer than 3000 people

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 116/01 Tuesday 1 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE GETS £84,800 TO HELP TACKLE DRUGS MENACE

Pendle is to get £84,800 to help tackle the local drugs menace. The cash injection has been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke, told the MP yesterday there would be a great deal of flexibility over the way the money could be spent. However, he said the money should be used "for the purposes of disrupting drugs markets and tackling drug related crime and disorder."

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Drugs are the scourge of our age. They destroy people and disrupt communities."

Note to Editors: Home Office Minister, Charles Clarke, wrote to the Pendle MP on 30 April as follows: "I have today announced the allocation of Communities Against Drugs funds for 2001-2002 to Crime and Disorder Partnerships, in England and Wales.

"Gordon Brown, Mo Mowlam and I wrote to you in March about the Communities Against Drugs Initiative which is an important part of the Government's commitment to help communities mobilise against drugs. New resources were allocated to this in the Budget - a total of £220 million over three years (£50 million/£70 million and £100 million). The funds are for Crime and Disorder Partnerships to disrupt local drugs markets and drugs related crime.

"I want to ensure that Crime and Disorder Partnerships can now begin their work on planning how they can use these new resources to tackle drugs in their communities. This is why I have decided to allocate funds for 2001-2002 now, and to undertake that partnerships will receive at least the same funding in the next two years.

These allocations have been designed to ensure that each partnership will receive some funding while at the same time targeting resources to those

more follows

PENDLE GETS £84,800 TO HELP TACKLE DRUGS MENACE

areas with the worst problems. Funds should be released to Local Authorities who will hold the funds for Crime and Disorder Reduction partnerships) shortly once grant conditions have been agreed.

"We are giving partnerships a great deal of flexibility over the way that the money is spent. Our requirements are that CDRPS should have the agreement of the local police commander and Drugs Action Team on a strategy before any interventions funded with the money can begin, and that the money is used for the purposes of disrupting drugs markets and tackling drug related crime and disorder. A third of the allocation for this year is for capital expenditure.

I recognise that this is an initial allocation, based on readily available information. I will be announcing the final allocations for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 by the end of July. In doing that allocation we will see whether the initial formula should be refined to take account of other factors. But partnerships can now work On the basis that they will receive at least the same allocation for the following two years. They will also be receiving guidance on the purposes of the funding and the ways in which it can be used.

"Further information about this initiative can be found on the crime reduction website - www.crimereduction.gov.uk - which now contains a Communities Against Drugs tool kit, which is being formally launched today. I am sure that partnerships will find it really helpful in planning how to use this funding.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 117/01 Thursday 3 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR PALACE MEETING OVER ROYALS' BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on the Leader of the House, Margaret Beckett, to get Buckingham, Palace and MPs talking about the shape of a new "Register of Royal Business Interests".

In the wake of the controversy over the business affairs of the Countess of Wessex , dramatically captured by the News of the World's "fake sheikh", the MP last month tabled a Commons motion calling for the setting up of a royal register along the lines of the one established for MPs themselves.

At Business Questions this afternoon, the MP asked the Leader of the House if she would "put out feelers to the Palace and use her good offices to arrange he a meeting between interested MPs and the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Luce, who is apparently drawing up guidelines". He went on: "if these guidelines are secret, they would be of no use at all". Margaret Beckett told the MPs the matter was under active consideration by the responsible authorities.

Note to Editors: The Commons motion 572 reads:
BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF WORKING MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY

That this House applauds the decision of Buckingham Palace to consider issuing guidance on how the business affairs of working members of the Royal Family might be conducted in future; believes a register of royal interests, along the lines of the House of Commons Register of Members' Interests, should be considered; hopes the Palace will invite the views of Right honourable and honourable Members on any draft guidance; and invites the Select Committee on Public Administration to review current practice and offer suggestions for change where it considers appropriate.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 112/01 Monday 7 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOVERNMENT PUTS MONEY WHERE ITS MOUTH IS - LOCAL NHS GETS £469,813 BOOST FOR DENTISTS

The Government has allocated the East Lancashire Health Authority over £469,000 to boost NHS dentistry in the area. East Lancashire has some of the worst dental health in the country.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, a long time campaigner for NHS dentistry said the cash would bring a smile to local dentists.

Speaking from his home in Barnoldswick, the MP said: “After years of neglect by the previous Government, we are now trying to turn things round. I want to see a high quality and properly funded NHS dental service here in Pendle. We’ve had some good news recently with new dental practices in Barnoldswick and Nelson. And I’m hoping a recent bid by the Health Authority for funding for a new mobile dentist is successful.”

The cash boosts of up to £6,500 per dental practice will help to modernise premises and upgrade equipment in NHS dental practices across the country. Examples of how the money could be spent include: Refurbishing and redecorating surgeries and waiting areas for the benefit of patients. Buying new dental equipment to encourage up to date treatments. Improving disabled access or installing play areas for children. Installing new IT systems to speed up appointment and recall systems.

Only practices meeting a minimum level of NHS commitment will receive funding. Health Authorities will make sure that equipment and facilities funded through the programme are used primarily for NHS patients.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 119/01 Monday 7 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FOOD "A RED HOT POLITICAL POTATO" says MP

Farming will have to change and adapt following the foot and mouth outbreak says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP told a May Day rally at Townley Park today that the latest crisis to hit agriculture had pushed food - and how it is produced - right up the political agenda. He told the crowd: "Food is now a red hot political potato."

The MP said that 20% of farmers received 80% of the subsidies going into agriculture - a position which was neither fair nor sustainable.

"I want to see a living, working countryside. Not the industrialised agriculture which has been forced on us. We need to return to a less intensive farming where people know where their food is coming from."

"The foot and mouth outbreak has been a terrible blow to farmers. We must do all we can to ensure it never happens again."

In his speech the MP mocked the Conservatives who were calling for an inquiry into the causes of the outbreak - even though they had not set up an inquiry into BSE. He said: "It took a Labour Government to set up the inquiry into BSE."

Also speaking at the rally were MPs Peter Pike and Jeremy Corbyn.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 120/01 Tuesday 8 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP WELCOMES GENERAL ELECTION AND WILL FIGHT IT ON LABOUR'S RECORD

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is relieved the General Election campaign is now under way. Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "There has been fevered speculation about the election date for ages. It is good we are now off the starting blocks for a relatively short and brisk campaign."

"Over the past four years the Labour Government has done a lot but there is still a lot more to do."

The MP added: "Looking back at Labour's record, I can point to the introduction of the National Minimum Wage as a landmark policy that made a huge difference in Pendle where 8% of all full time adults in work got a pay rise and a third of all part-time women workers. The Conservatives were dead against it."

"Of course, we've had our ups and downs locally as well as nationally. But unemployment is at its lowest level for 25 years and we are managing the economy well. Interest rates are half the level we saw under the Conservatives and that feeds through to lower mortgage payments."

"This Parliament has been an interesting and challenging one for me personally. My Private Member's Bill on the Right to Roam was hugely influential in persuading the Government to act."

"Now to the hustings!"

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 121/01 Thursday 10 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP RENEWS ATTACK ON "PEOPLE'S PEERS"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice has renewed his attack on the so called people's peers.

In a debate at Westminster yesterday, he revealed that Lord Stevenson - the Chairman of the House of Lords Appointments Commission - had himself been selected for the job by a panel which included Sir Herman Ousley - one of the tranche of 15 newly appointed people's peers named earlier this month.

Stevenson sparked controversy when he said he was looking for people who would feel "comfortable" in the House of Lords. "Hairdressers", for example, "wouldn't cut it."

The MP asked: "Who appointed the noble Lord Dennis Stevenson, the snob? The answer is a panel chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, assisted by Lord Fellowes, who sounds a good lad, and some other worthies, including a then independent assessor who is now a people's peer--incredible. Sir Herman Ousely, now Lord Ousely, was on the panel that selected Dennis Stevenson to become chairman of the House of Lords Appointments Commission."

The MP added: "When I said that the process was sick joke, I meant it. I also meant it when I said that I hoped to re-ignite a debate on the future of the second Chamber."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 122/01 Monday 14 May 2001

www.gordonprentice.com

PENDLE HITS THE JACKPOT WITH CHILDREN'S FUND

Pendle is in one of 17 areas in England to benefit from the first wave of funding from the new "Children's Fund" announced by the Government earlier this month.

Lancashire came up trumps for a share in the first year of the £70m Children's Fund to be distributed by a "Local Network".

Home Office Minister, Paul Boetang, told Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice,: "The aim of the Local Network is to help children in poverty achieve their potential by investing directly in the work of the local community and voluntary groups that provide local solutions to the problem of child poverty. The Local Network will support local voluntary and community groups helping vulnerable children aged 0-19."

"The Children's Fund will roll out over three years and grants will be made to community and voluntary groups under four themes encompassing "aspiration and experiences" for projects that give children experiences or achieve goals that more privileged children may take for granted; "economic disadvantage" for projects helping families to improve their living standards; "isolation and access" for projects that help children that are isolated or alone; and "children's voices" for projects that give children and young people the chance to express their opinions and give advice on matters that concern them."

Gordon Prentice commented: "I want Pendle's youngsters to benefit from this innovative scheme. Local Groups that want to apply for a grant of between £250 and £7,000 can contact the Local Network call centre on 0845 1130161."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 123/01 Monday 14 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE GETS 4 MINUTE "PARTY POLITICAL BROADCAST"

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, is putting together a 4 minute party political broadcast for Pendle - to be transmitted to voters by local radio station 2BR.

Mr Prentice will be recording his PPB on Wednesday 16 May at the radio station's studios at Lomeshaye Business Village in Nelson. Parliamentary candidates from the other political parties contesting the Pendle constituency have also been invited to take part.

Speaking from his campaign headquarters in Carr Road, Nelson earlier today, Gordon Prentice said: "This is a superb idea. Local radio is a great way of reaching the voters. Everywhere I go people are tuned in to 2BR."

He pledged: "I shall try to keep my 4 minute PPB light and amusing. I realise most people find PPBs a complete turn-off."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 124/01 Monday 14 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

CONSERVATIVES SILENT ON INFLATION says PRENTICE

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle has challenged local Conservatives to explain why the Tory manifesto contains no inflation target.

Speaking from his campaign HQ in Nelson, Gordon Prentice, said: "We all remember the time under the last Government when interest rates stood at 15%. The absence of an inflation target in the Conservative Party manifesto tells me they are the party of boom and bust and sky high mortgage rates."

"The Conservatives' record is pretty chilling. Interest rates hit 15% for a whole year, and were over 10% for four years. Inflation hit 10%. Unemployment doubled between 1979 and 1997, and in 1993 it exceeded three million. Under the Conservatives, unemployment here in Pendle was more than double the level it is today."

Prentice added: "In the early 1990s around 1,000 business went bust every week. The national debt doubled. Borrowing hit £50 billion while Michael Portillo was Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Between 1990 and 1997, 400,000 homes were repossessed, and one and a half million people suffered from negative equity."

"The Conservatives' sums don't add up. The claimed savings are based on misleading assumptions, invented costings and bogus figures. They are pledged to cut £16 billion in public spending but can't say what they will cut. They propose reckless tax cuts but can't say how they will pay for them."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 125/01 Monday 14 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

WAITING LIST TARGETS MET AT BURNLEY GENERAL

The Chief Executive of Burnley Health Care Trust, David Chew, has confirmed that the waiting list targets set for the Trust by the Government in 2000/1 have all been met.

Writing in the May issue of "Communication Matters" - a newsletter for Trust staff and others interested in the local NHS - Mr Chew said the key waiting list targets had all been met for (a) the number of patients waiting over 13 weeks for an out-patient appointment; (b) patients waiting over 12 months for an in-patient/day care procedure and (c) the number of patients waiting in-patient day case procedures.

Speaking from Nelson today, Labour's Parliamentary candidate said: "This is good news. Waiting lists are now 151,000 lower than under the previous Government. And this is the 13th consecutive month that the pledge to cut waiting lists has been maintained and the longest ever period of consecutive falls. Waiting times are falling too and the Government is investing an extra £75 million to bring them down further."

Gordon Prentice added: "I sometimes hear it said that the fall in inpatient waiting has been at the expense of outpatients. Not true. Inpatient and outpatient waiting figures have both fallen over a full year - inpatient waiting by over 30,000 and outpatient by 118,800. There are now 17,100 more nurses and 6,700 more doctors than in 1997. And 500,000 more operations carried out every year."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 126/01 Tuesday 15 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE SLATES LIB DEM MANIFESTO AS "MENU WITHOUT PRICES"

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, has slated the Liberal Democrat manifesto, published today.

Speaking from Barnoldswick earlier today, he said: "Their manifesto is just another menu without prices, with promise after promise funded over and over again by the same tax increases."

Prentice added: "The Liberal Democrats opposed the new 10p rate of income tax, they opposed the Working Families Tax Credit, and their policy on the National Minimum Wage is in disarray. The Lib Dems opposed the National Minimum Wage which has been such a boon to Pendle."

He added: "Now their manifesto commits them to abolishing the New Deal. They opposed the windfall tax on the utilities which the newly elected Labour Government brought in after the last election - and which funded the New Deal which gets young people into jobs."

"The Liberal Democrats can never win in Pendle. But in the past they have split the anti Conservative vote and let the Tory in."

In 1997 the Lib Dems in Pendle got under 12% of the vote.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 127/01 Wednesday 16 May 2001

www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE WELCOMES COMMITMENT IN LABOUR MANIFESTO TO QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

The Labour Manifesto, published today, pledges a continued commitment to economic stability with mortgages as
low as possible, low inflation and sound public finances. The
minimum wage - so important to Pendle - will go up to £4.20

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, Labour's Parliamentary candidate said: "A stable economy is important to us in Pendle. We have very high levels of owner occupation here so the costs of a mortgage and interest rates are critically important."

The manifesto also pledged substantial increase in spending on education: more than 5% each year for 3 years. Health spending will increase by an average of 6% each year for 3 years. Police get an extra £1.6bn a year by 2003-04. And transport gets 20% a year for next 3 years.

Front-line staff will be recruited to drive up public service standards. Labour plans 10,000 more teachers with more money going direct to head teachers. There will be 20,000 more nurses and 10,000 more doctors with the creation of specially-built surgical units to cut delays.

On criminal justice reform Labour pledges a victims bill of rights.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 128/01 Thursday 17 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

"BRING BACK MATRON" PLEDGE - PRENTICE TELLS TORY CANDIDATE TO DO HIS HOMEWORK

A Conservative pledge to bring back Matron to hospital wards is already the official policy of the Labour Government says Labour's Parliamentary candidate, Gordon Prentice.

Prentice was responding to a Conservative leaflet currently being delevered to Pendle's voters in which pledge number 4 (of 5) is "to bring back Matron" - something the Labour Government is poised to do anyway.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, Prentice said: "My Conservative opponent ought to know better. On 4 April the Health Secretary committed the Government to bring back Matron - a post abolished by the Conservatives 30 years ago."

Following strong public support for the idea, first raised in the NHS Plan, around 2000 Matrons will be on wards throughout the NHS by 2004, with 500 in post by next April. Matrons will have influence over cleaning and catering budgets in hospitals worth an average £2m per trust. National guidance to establish these new posts is today being sent to all NHS Chief Executives.

Every hospital will have matrons in overall charge of a group of wards. They will be paid up to £31,000 per year.

Key front-line staff will now have the clear authority to prevent and remedy shortcomings or failings in any services that contribute to patient care. Matrons will be strong clinical leaders given the power to make things better for patients and families. Matrons will wear distinctive uniforms to ensure that they are visible to patients and their families.

more follows

"BRING BACK MATRON" PLEDGE - PRENTICE TELLS TORY CANDIDATE TO DO HIS HOMEWORK

Note to Editors: The Department of Health indicates the 10 key things that Matron will do are:

Lead by example
Matron will lead the nursing team in groups of wards. They will demonstrate to other nurses the high standards NHS patients can expect.

Make sure patients get quality care
Matron will be responsible for driving up the standards of care, ensuring continuous improvement in nursing care, making sure every patient gets quality care.

Make sure the wards are clean
Matron will have the power to withhold payments to cleaning companies if cleaning standards are not met. They will oversee the standards of cleanliness of each of the wards in their charge.

Make sure the food is good
Matron will have the power to withhold payments to catering companies if standards of catering are not up to scratch. They will ensure patients get their meals and are able to eat them and that the nutritional needs of all patients are met.

Make sure elderly patients are treated with respect Matron will have the power to ensure nurses and other NHS staff treat elderly patients with respect at all times. For example, matron will ensure elderly patients are addressed as they wish - using Mr. or Mrs. rather than more familiar first names.

Improve the wards for patients

Matron will oversee the spending of ward budgets. Each ward sister has a budget of £5000 to improve the ward environment which nurses control. Matron will see that nurses do have the say over how this is spent and that ward budgets lead to real improvements for patients.

Resolve problems for patients and their relatives
Matron will work with the new Patients Advocacy and Liaison Service to resolve patient problems on the spot. They will be highly visible, with the authority to get things done.

Prevent and control hospital-acquired infection
Matron will ensure that the highest standards for preventing and controlling infection are set and met on every ward.

Make sure nurses have more power
Matron will ensure nurses have the power to order tests, admit and discharge patients, run clinics, triage patients and, where appropriate, prescribe medicines.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 129/01 Friday 18 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE TELLS PENDLE FARMERS THERE IS NO FIDDLING OF FOOT AND MOUTH FIGURES

Pendle's Labour Parliamentary candidate, Gordon Prentice, has told a Blacko farmer the Government is neither concealing not fiddling the foot and mouth statistics. Prentice says information on the progress of the outbreak is updated daily on the MAFF web site - www.maff.gov.uk

Yesterday there were no new outbreaks of foot and mouth reported for the first time since the epidemic began 87 days ago.

Speaking from his constituency office today, Prentice said: "The information is freely available. Any farmer without access to the internet can phone up the NFU."

"The web site also gives details of the geographical location of all confirmed and any new cases."

Prentice added: "We are not out of the woods yet. There could be further cases but I believe the worst it over."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 130/01 Sunday 20 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE BACKS NEW PLEDGES FOR A SECOND TERM LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Since 1997 the Labour Government has made progress but there is still a lot to do says Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking to a meeting of residents in the Whitefield ward of Nelson earlier today, Gordon Prentice said: "A typical mortgage in Pendle is way below the level we experienced under the Tories. Inflation is the lowest for 30 years. We've seen the best ever results in our primary schools. Nationally, 17,000 extra nurses are now in the NHS. Crime is down 10 percent. One million more people are in work and we have the new children's tax credit

"I want to see us build on this success over the next five years.
A Labour Government will deliver mortgages as low as possible, low inflation and sound public finances. We'll recruit and train 10,000 extra teachers and work for higher standards in secondary schools. We'll recruit and train 20,000 extra nurses and 10,000 extra doctors for the NHS. And we'll attract 6,000 extra recruits to raise police numbers to their highest ever level."

"Pensioners winter fuel payment will be retained, and the minimum wage will rise to £4.20 in October. Of the five pledges made in the 1997 General Election, three have been fulfilled and the remaining two are on course to be fulfilled within the five year term. Our infant class size pledge will be met in September 2001, our youth justice pledge in March 2002.

Gordon Prentice continued: "Over 18 years of Tory government, Britain was subjected to the worst two recessions since the Second World War. The results are all too familiar:

more follows

"Interest rates hit 15% for a whole year, and were over 10% for four years. Inflation hit 10%. Unemployment doubled between 1979 and 1997, and in 1993 it exceeded three million.

In the early 1990s around 1,000 business went bust every week.
The national debt doubled. Borrowing hit £50 billion while Michael Portillo was Chief Secretary to the Treasury.
Between 1990 and 1997, 400,000 homes were repossessed, and one and a half million people suffered from negative equity."

Note to Editors: In the their last three budgets, the Tory Government of which William Hague and Michael Portillo were both Cabinet ministers, cut schools funding by £60 per pupil in real terms.

- "Our failure to improve the level of public education is one of the areas that I believe Conservatives have got to be most concerned about, and frankly ashamed of."
- Steve Norris, Conservative Party Vice-Chairman, Radio 4 Today Programme, 11th March 1998

Under the pervious Government, the 25 per cent cuts in nursing and midwifery training places in the mid-1990s led directly to the nursing shortage Labour inherited. Between 1990 and 1997, waiting lists rose by 400,000 and 60,000 general and acute beds were lost.

- "I think if someone wants to pay to see their GP, they should be encouraged to do so. The problem with the NHS is that we do not charge for much of what we do."
- Ann Widdecombe, Press Gallery lunch, 28th January 1999

- "Philosophically we have moved on. Insurance companies could cover conditions that are not high tech or expensive, like hip and knee replacements, hernia and cataract operations, which currently involve long waiting times."
- Liam Fox, Shadow Health Secretary, Sunday Times, 16th January 2000

Overall recorded violent crime increased by 166 per cent between 1979 and 1997. The Conservatives abolished the housing allowance for new police entrants, dealing a terrible blow to recruitment which Labour is now beginning to turn around.

The Conservatives cannot be trusted with the minimum wage. They have never believed in it. The Tories think the minimum wage is "immoral" and said it would cost a million jobs.

- "I think the minimum wage is an immoral policy."
- Michael Portillo, General Election campaign 1997, quoted in The Guardian, 4/2/00

- "We are not great enthusiasts about the minimum wage, we don't think it is really a very effective way of relieving poverty."
- Michael Portillo Today Programme BBC Radio 4, 14 February 2000

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 131/01 Saturday 19 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE ROPED INTO LINE DANCING IN BARLICK

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, was today roped into a line dancing session in Barnoldswick's town square.

Prentice - who has served two terms as the town's MP - joined a team from the Barnoldswick Labour Party who had set up a stall in the square in a bid to capture Barlick's floating voter.

Mid morning, their coveted patch in the town square was invaded by forty line dancers - complete with a booming sound system - and the Labour candidate was made an offer he couldn't refuse: line dance or else!

Speaking from the town square, Gordon Prentice said: "This was my first time - and it showed!"

"I always thought line dancing was a piece of cake but I've revised my opinion."

"There are complicated steps to remember. Rhythms and technique you've got to master."

"I was rather overwhelmed by it all."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 112/01 Tuesday 22 May 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE RIDICULES CONSERVATIVE BUDGET PLANS

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, has ridiculed Conservative spending plans saying they don't add up.

Speaking from Labour's Carr Road Campaign HQ, he said: "There is a black hole of more than £20 billion in the Conservative's budget plans. Oliver Letwin, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury has confirmed that the Conservatives want to make tax cuts totalling more than £20 billion. But so far they have only identified £8 billion of so-called savings. Under even the slightest scrutiny these figures fall apart."

"In order to meet their tax commitments, the Tories would need to cut £20 billion from schools, hospitals and the fight against crime - an average of £30 million from every constituency in Britain."

"The money that is now coming into Pendle - and which is sorely needed - would dry up immediately if a Conservative Government were elected. That is the real message of the Conservative Budget plans."

"£20 billion is almost half of the schools budget and the equivalent of 40% of expenditure on pensioners, and 40% of the health budget."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 07703570944

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 133/01 Tuesday 22 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PHOTOCALL - LABOUR PARTY STALL AT COLNE OUTDOOR MARKET, WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 11.00AM

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate, Gordon Prentice, will be pressing the flesh in Colne tomorrow, Wednesday, along with Labour Party colleagues at the town's outdoor market at 11.00am.

Gordon Prentice said: "We'll be saying hello to the shoppers and fielding the questions as best we can! I know there is solid Labour support in Colne and I shall be there to remind everyone to go out and vote on 7 June."

He went on: "At our stall in Barnoldswick town square last Saturday I was roped into line dancing. I'm wondering what there could be in store for me in Colne!"

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 134/01 Tuesday 22 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

FOOT AND MOUTH THREATENS PENDLE

The Chief Executive of Pendle Borough Council, Stephen Barnes, has been urged by Gordon Prentice to re-assess immediately the policy on footpath opening in the area in the light of the foot and mouth outbreak on Pendle's border on the North Yorkshire side of the A59.

In Pendle seven footpaths and bridleways are currently open. Of these, two are in Barnoldswick which is close to the area of infection.

Prentice told the Chief Executive he was very worried indeed the infection may spread into Pendle and called for urgent liaison between the Council, the County and the people from MAFF.

Prentice said: "It simply doesn't bear thinking about if this dreadful disease gets into Pendle. I have spoken to Tim Ormerod who chairs Lancashire's Public Rights of Way Committee to make sure any necessary closure orders are implemented asap."

On 19 May the Chief Vet, Jim Scudamore, warned farmers in the Settle and Clitheroe areas to continue to be vigilant to avoid spreading FMD. He said then the situation around Settle and Clitheroe was causing great concern.

He said: "The outbreak has developed rapidly, and the situation we face, with farmers having lots of parcels of land over a wide area, means that even greater care is needed to stop the spread of FMD by the movements of people, animals, vehicles and other equipment." He said the existing slaughter policy would be followed through with infected animals killed within 24 hours of the initial report.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News **from Gordon Prentice**

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 135/01 Tuesday 22 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PHOTOCALL - GORDON PRENTICE AT ST PHILIP'S FAMILY SUPPORT CENTRE, LEEDS ROAD, NELSON on WEDNESDAY 23 MAY at 10.00am

Labour's Parliamentary candidate, Gordon Prentice, will be saying hello to parents and children who use the St Philip's Family Support Centre in Nelson, tomorrow Wednesday 23 May 10.00am.

The Support Centre, which will be celebrating its 1st Year anniversary in June, provides a number of projects aimed at helping families with young children. This includes childcare before and after school, drop-in creche facilities, advice centre, childcare during school holidays and training opportunities for adults.

Gordon Prentice said: "St Philip's is doing fantastic work both in providing excellent childcare facilities throughout the day and giving advice, help and support to adults on careers, education and health matters."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 136/01 Thursday 24 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PHOTOCALL: CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU at 61/63 Every Street, Nelson at 2pm today Thursday 24 May

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, will be at the official opening of the CAB's new premises at 61/63 Every Street, Nelson.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 137/01 Thursday 24 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PHOTOCALL: WALTON LANE NURSERY, PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP at 11.30am on Friday 25 May

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, will be cutting the cake at the grand opening of the new Parent and Toddler Group at the Nursery at Walton Lane.

The official speeches start at 11.35am led by Audrey Wilson with the cake cutting at 11.45am.

A slice of cake and coffee for all at 11.50am

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 138/01 Monday 28 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

HEALTH: THE TORIES TROJAN HORSE says PRENTICE

The Conservatives would push people into paying for operations according to Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice. Speaking from his campaign HQ at Carr Road, Nelson, he said: "The Conservative's "Patients Guarantee" is a Trojan Horse. Under their Patients Guarantee, people with conditions such as hip replacements would have to go private or be pushed to the back of the queue."

He added: "Conservative Shadow Health Secretary, Liam Fox, has admitted what the Tory Patients Guarantee really means. At a speech to the 1999 Conservative Party conference, he said: *"Our Patients Guarantee is a silent revolution. No one has really picked up yet on what it actually means. What we are starting is perhaps a Trojan Horse because most of them of them haven't thought through the implications of what we are doing."*

Liam Fox has spelt out the type of operations the Conservatives believe people should pay for under their Patients Guarantee: *"Insurance companies could cover conditions that are not high tech or expensive, like hip and knee replacements, hernia and cataract operations, which currently involve long waiting times."*
According to BUPA, hip replacement operations can cost £6,000 - £9,000 and cataract operations can cost up to £3,000. These are prices well beyond the means of most people.

Prentice added: "The Tories pretend they would keep the NHS free for those who use it, but their own words betray them. While pretending to offer improved standards for services, the Tories Patients Guarantee is actually a backdoor way of downgrading and excluding a whole range of serious conditions from NHS cover."
Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 139/01 Tuesday 29 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE PLEDGES A FAIR DEAL FOR PENSIONERS

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, told pensioners in Ashiana Lodge and Bannister Court, Nelson today that Labour was determined to give them a fair share in Britain's growing prosperity.

Gordon Prentice - who was joined by Labour's County Council candidate, Colin Waite, - said: "The pension increase in April of £5 for a single pensioner and £8 for a pensioner couple helped and we are going to see increase above inflation next year too. These increases will be a big help for many people in Pendle."

"But we are also helping at least 3,000 of our least well-off pensioners in Pendle who will gain from the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG). This increased to £92.15 for

all single pensioners and £140.55 for couples. For pensioners with a bit of money the lower capital limit in MIG is doubled from £3,000 to £6,000."

Prentice added: "Labour's objective is to ensure that pensioners get their fair share, with more help for those on low and modest incomes."

"We are also bringing in a new Pension credit which will provide additional help to those who have saved. This is a priority."

He added: "We've done a lot but we need to do more. After the 1997 election, it took us a couple of years to get the economy back on its feet. We inherited a terrible mess from the Conservatives. You can't spend money you don't have."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 140/01 Wednesday 30 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

MORTGAGES WILL GO THROUGH THE ROOF IF THE CONSERVATIVES GET BACK says PRENTICE

The return of a Conservative Government would return Britain to boom and bust according to Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice. He says the Conservatives are repeating the same mistakes they made in the late 1980s and early 1990s that led to sky high interest rates and record business failures.

Speaking from his Campaign HQ in Nelson earlier today, Prentice said: "It would be a return to mortgage misery. Under the Major Government, actions for house repossessions at Nelson County Court hit over 280 a year in the early 90s. Nationally, between 1990 and 1997, 400,000 homes were repossessed."

"We remember when interest rates hit 15% for a whole year. Inflation hit 10%. Unemployment doubled between 1979 and 1997, and in 1993 it exceeded three million. The national debt doubled. Borrowing hit £50 billion while Michael Portillo was Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Gordon Prentice added: "The Conservatives' sums don't add up. They are committed to cut £20 billion in public spending but can't say what they will cut. The their

irresponsible tax promises would put economic stability at risk and threatens the investment in our vital public services. The only way they can pay for their plans is by savage cuts to schools, hospitals, and the police."

Note to Editors: Pendle has one of the highest rates of home ownership in the country. 86% of the housing stock is private (75% for the North West Region and 76% for England). "Of course it [the Conservative Party] should be apologetic for mismanaging the economy." Michael Portillo, Sunday Times 20th September 1998.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 141/01 Wednesday 30 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

AZAD KASHMIR PM TO MEET PRENTICE

The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Sultan Mahmood Chaudry, will be meeting Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, at a rally in Nelson this Sunday.

Prentice has long supported the right of self determination for the people of Kashmir.

Many people from Kashmiri backgrounds live in Pendle and Prentice has taken a close interest in the issue over the years.

Last month, the Prime Minister wrote to Gordon Prentice from the state capital, Muzaffarabad, wishing him well in the General Election.

He wrote: "I greatly appreciate your commitment to the cause of down-trodden people of Jammu and Kashmir and I hope you will continue to support their right to self determination."

He added: "I thank you on behalf of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and wish you success in the forthcoming elections."

Prentice made a fact finding visit to the area in 1998.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 142/01 Wednesday 30 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, will be on air live tomorrow (Thursday) on Radio Lancashire between 4pm and 5pm.

He will be debating environmental issues with candidates from other Lancashire constituencies representing the Conservative, Lib Dem and Green parties.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 143/01 Wednesday 30 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE MAKES BOLD PITCH FOR LIB DEMS VOTES

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle is making a pitch for Liberal Democrat votes. In Barnoldswick today he will say:

"In some parts of Pendle, the Liberal Democrat vote is strong in council elections. But - for whatever reason - this never translates into a big vote in Parliamentary elections when the future of the country is at stake. Last time, the Lib Dems came a very poor third with less than 12% of the vote. The Lib Dem candidate then, Tony Greaves, candidly told the Nelson Leader on 9 May 1997:

'We knew we had no chance, but we had to have a sacrificial lamb to stand. I volunteered to be the sacrificial lamb, because it clearly had to be someone senior who would do it.'

Prentice added: "However, while the Lib Dems can't win in Pendle, in the past they have split the anti Conservative vote - and let the Conservatives in through the back door. It would be a tragedy for this area if that were to happen again."

"Too often the Lib Dem's policies simply don't add up. They would have us believe their penny on income tax would right the sins of the world! And I haven't forgotten their antagonism to the National Minimum Wage which has been such a boon to Pendle where 8% of all adults in full time work got a pay rise and a staggering 30% of part time women workers."

"The Lib Dems also voted against the windfall tax on the privatised utilities. This provided cash to help us launch the New Deal which has got 832 young people here in Pendle into work."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 144/01 Wednesday 30 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

FORMER PENDLE CONSERVATIVE MP JOINS LIB DEMS

The former Conservative MP for Pendle, John Lee, has announced that he has joined the Liberal Democrats. John Lee lost his seat in 1992 to Labour's Gordon Prentice who is standing again in the General Election in a bid to secure a third term as the area's MP.

Speaking from his Campaign HQ in Nelson earlier today, Gordon Prentice said: "I remember John Lee as an affable kind of guy but he made some serious misjudgements. He was a leading member of the Conservative Government that brought in the hated poll tax which inflicted such appalling damage on this area."

In a leaflet issued during the 1987 General Election campaign, Lee had this to say: "Figures (on the Poll Tax) put forward so far by other parties are pure fantasy. The actual charge will be up to the Council not the Government. In any case there will be generous rebates and supplementary benefits to help. The Conservatives new community Charge will spread the burden more fairly with lower rates for many."

For three years Lee was a loyal supporter of the Poll Tax. He voted down the line with the Conservative Government on every vote in Parliament. However, at the very end, when he saw the damage that was being done to his own Pendle constituency, he admitted it had been a terrible mistake. In the Independent in March 1991 he called for "a public holiday with street parties and celebrations" to mark the end of the Poll Tax.

From 1987 -1990 John Lee voted to freeze Child Benefit. Since 1997, the Labour Government increased Child Benefit by 30% in real terms and now stands at £15.50 - the highest ever.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 145/01 Wednesday 30 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE HOPEFUL THAT PENDLE MAY ESCAPE FOOT AND MOUTH

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, is hopeful that Pendle may have escaped the outbreak of foot and mouth which is ravaging farms close to the constituency border.

Prentice wrote to the Council's Chief Executive, Stephen Barnes, on 22 May when it was clear that the epidemic was fast approaching Pendle, urging the Council to immediately review its policy on footpath opening. Prentice wanted all footpaths in the danger zones closed.

The Executive Director responsible for monitoring the Foot and Mouth outbreak, John Kirk, told Prentice that "if there are no cases in Pendle reported by Monday 29 May then we may be past the worst risk period."

John Kirk added: "A small number of paths in the Borough have been re-opened. These paths were subject to MAFF guidelines on risk assessment and an emergency meeting concluded that those re-opened should stay open (as they are not in direct contact with stock) but no action should be taken to open any more."

Gordon Prentice said: "I am keeping my fingers crossed we have escaped F&M. Walkers should rigorously follow the official advice about where it is safe to walk.

And farmers should scrupulously stick to the necessary bio-security measures on their farms. If in doubt, disinfect."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 145/01 Wednesday 30 May 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE HOPEFUL THAT PENDLE MAY ESCAPE FOOT AND MOUTH

Issue Labour sets out how this election is a choice between a vote for schools with Labour or £20 billion cuts under the Tories.
Key Points to Make The Toriesí commitment to cut £20 billion from public services would mean massive cuts for schools.
Tory cuts for schools means the end of the literacy and numeracy strategies, rising class sizes and the number of teachers cut.
Tory cuts to schools When the Tories left office over four in ten 11-year-olds were failing to reach the expected level for their age in English and Maths. 477,000 infants were packed into classes of more than 30. Schools faced year on year budget cuts, having to freeze teaching posts or get rid of valued staff.

Today the Tory approach threatens to take us straight back to those days. The Tories could not sustain Labourís level of investment in education at the same time as cutting public spending by £20 billion. The level of cuts the Tories would have to make means savage cuts to investment in schools.

The Toriesí ëfree schoolsí policy will bring chaos to our schools. It will inevitably mean falling standards as they scrap support for the literacy hour and daily maths lesson. Class sizes would be allowed to soar as 6,000 teachers employed with targeted funding as part of Labourís class size drive face the sack.

The Toriesí ëfree schoolsí policy will also mean an end to school transport services, co-ordinated special needs provision and support for excluded pupils.

In short, the Toriesí policy of cuts for schools means the end of the literacy and numeracy strategies, rising class sizes and the number of teachers cut. The Tories cannot be trusted with our schools.
The Tory record Class sizes and pupil teacher ratios rose in every age group dramatically under the last Tory government. Since 1997, they have fallen rapidly in

infant classes, fallen in junior classes and despite nearly 200,000 more pupils grown at a third of the speed in secondary as they did before.

Teacher numbers are up by over 11,000 net of any leavers since Jan 1997 ñ more than twice the increase in the previous five years.

Spending fell by £120 per pupil in real terms from 1992-7. It has risen in real terms by £540 per pupil since then.
Supporting Quote Our failure to improve the level of public education is one of the areas that I believe Conservatives have got to be most concerned about, and frankly ashamed of.í Steve Norris, Conservative Party Vice-Chairman,
BBC Today Programme, 11th March 1998 INVESTING IN EDUCATION NOT CUTTING

Issue Labour sets out how this election is a choice between a vote for schools with Labour or £20 billion cuts under the Tories.
Key Points to Make Labour has turned around primary education ñ last year saw the best ever test results for 11 year olds.
Now weíll work to transfer this success to secondary schools.
The Tories £20 billion cuts would mean fewer teachers, higher class sizes and falling standards for all.
A lot done
By 1997, 18 years of Tory under-funding and neglect had left Britainís schools in an appalling state. Buildings had been left to crumble, class sizes were rising, half of all 11-year-olds were failing their basis tests in English and maths and staff morale was at an all-time low.

In four years we have boosted staff numbers in schools and turned around primary education:
There are 11,000 more teachers in post in England than in 1997.
Spending per pupil has risen by £540 in real terms.
450,000 fewer infants are in classes over 30 - by September no 5,6 or 7 year old will be in a class of more than 30.
Class sizes for 8-11 year olds have fallen for the second year running after rising for more than a decade.
17,000 schools are being repaired or rebuilt ñ thanks to our trebling of funds spent on school capital.
Last year saw the best ever test results for 11 year olds, thanks in part to our literacy and numeracy strategies which focus on the basics.
A lot to do But we need to go further, particularly for older children. GCSE results are improving, but progress is not fast enough. So weíll carry on with our programme of sustained investment and reform, keeping up the pressure on primaries but with a new focus on transforming secondary schools in our second term. Over the next few years this will mean:
Another 10,000 extra teachers and 20,000 support staff.
Every secondary school with a distinct ethos and mission to help all children, whatever their talents, reach their full potential.
The literacy and numeracy strategy introduced for 11-14 year olds.
More vocational options.
More access to music and sport.

The choice The choice is clear ñ more investment for higher standards for all pupils with Labour, or a return to the Thatcherite agenda of £20 billion cuts going to the core of the education budget under the Tories.

Election Brief 01/29: 4 June 2001

EMBED Word.Picture.8

Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pendle, Gordon Prentice, is hopeful that Pendle may have escaped the outbreak of foot and mouth which is ravaging farms close to the constituency border.

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The Executive Director responsible for monitoring the Foot and Mouth outbreak, John Kirk, told Prentice that "if there are no cases in Pendle reported by Monday 29 May then we may be past the worst risk period."

John Kirk added: "A small number of paths in the Borough have been re-opened. These paths were subject to MAFF guidelines on risk assessment and an emergency meeting concluded that those re-opened should stay open (as they are not in direct contact with stock) but no action should be taken to open any more."

Gordon Prentice said: "I am keeping my fingers crossed we have escaped F&M. Walkers should rigorously follow the official advice about where it is safe to walk. And farmers should scrupulously stick to the necessary bio-security measures on their farms. If in doubt, disinfect."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 147/01 Wednesday 6 June 2001

www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE CLOSES THE CAMPAIGN IN PENDLE SAYING LABOUR DESERVES A SECOND TERM

Speaking from his Campaign HQ in Nelson on the eve of Thursday's General Election, Pendle's Labour candidate, Gordon Prentice, said:

“The Labour Government deserves to be re-elected. Mortgages are half what they averaged under the Conservatives, saving homeowners in Pendle a small fortune. There are a million more people in work. Crime is down 10 per cent overall and police numbers are rising. There are 17,100 more nurses and 6,700 more doctors in the NHS since 1997. Hospital waiting lists are down by over 150,000. There are 11,000 more teachers in post in England alone. Last year saw the best-ever test results for 11-year-olds. Class sizes are now falling for every age group.”

“The Labour Government has made mistakes. I have been one of its foremost critics within the Parliamentary Labour Party. But it is a million times better than its Conservative predecessor and, like the rest of us, it will learn from its mistakes.”

Prentice, who is making a bid to represent the constituency for a third term, continued: “If Labour wins the Winter Fuel Payment will be retained. The Minimum Wage will rise to £4.20 an hour. The NHS will get another 20,000 nurses and 10,000 doctors. Maximum waiting times will be cut from 18 months now to just 6 months with the average wait down to 7 weeks. And another 10,000 extra teachers and 20,000 support staff will be recruited.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice

Labour’s Parliamentary Candidate for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 148/01 Tuesday 12 June 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

FOOT AND MOUTH HITS PENDLE

New outbreaks of foot and mouth have this week hit Pendle after crossing the A59 “firebreak” which separated the constituency from the infected area in the Ribble Valley.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson, the MP said: “We all feel tremendous concern for our local farmers who are seeing their livestock lost to this dreadful disease. I have been in touch with John Kirk from Pendle Council who is keeping an eye on the progress of the outbreak on a minute by minute basis and I am keeping my fingers crossed that it can be stopped in its tracks.”

The MP continued: “I am told the outbreak at Bracewell was found by sampling. The animals had not actually shown symptoms of the disease. That is encouraging as it means F&M has not been incubating for a long time. The other outbreaks in

Thornton-in-Craven and near the Todber Caravan site just outside Pendle on the Blacko to Gisburn road are clearly very worrying."

"None of the culled animals is to be burnt on site. Because nationally the number of cases of foot and mouth is tailing off, fortunately there is now rendering capacity."

The MP added: "I have spoken to local vets who tell me the slaughter policy is the only realistic one. The Government is following the best scientific advice available."

Note to Editors: The MP wrote to the Council's Chief Executive, Stephen Barnes, on 22 May when it was clear that the epidemic was fast approaching Pendle, urging the Council to immediately review its policy on footpath opening. He wanted all footpaths in the danger zones closed.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 149/01 Tuesday 12 June 2001
www.gordonprentice.com

PRENTICE RE-ELECTED FOR THIRD TERM AS PENDLE'S MP

Gordon Prentice, newly re-elected for a third term as Pendle's MP, has expressed real concern about the turnout at the General Election. Last Friday morning at the Pendle count in Colne he told supporters that Labour had to become a crusading Party which could galvanise its support to come out and vote. He said it wasn't enough to be a competent Government of "pragmatism and managerialism".

Speaking to Party workers in Pendle this week, the MP said: "Labour has won an historic second term and we should celebrate that fact. But many of our supporters stayed at home. Indeed, the most significant feature of the General Election nationwide was the huge drop in turnout. People stayed away in droves. Most pundits explain this by saying the polls all predicted a Labour landslide making the result a foregone conclusion. I also believe the electorate felt Labour should be "waved through" to a second term "to finish the job"."

Turnout was down sharply in Pendle, and in all the other East Lancashire constituencies. In Pendle, it was down 11.4%; in Burnley 11.3%; in Hyndburn 14.5%; in Rossendale 14.2%; and in Blackburn 9.4% where there were seven parties in contention. Turnout in Pendle from 1992 - 2001 was down 20%. In terms of actual votes cast, the table overleaf shows that over the last three General Elections, the Conservative vote has declined. The Lib Dem vote in 2001 stuck at its 1997 level.

The MP continued: “Although there are nationwide trends that can’t be bucked, significant variations can usually be explained by local factors.”

more follows

PRENTICE RE-ELECTED FOR THIRD TERM AS PENDLE’S MP

“In Pendle, foot and mouth struck in Barrowford in the middle of the election campaign. The Craven Herald which sells thousands of copies in West Craven took small ads off the front page for only the second time in its 150 year history and replaced them with the story “Death in the Dales”. In Labour constituencies hit by F&M such as Carlisle and Copeland there were big swings away from Labour.”

“The “Keep off our Grass” campaign featured in the local press for many months in the run up to the election. Although my own position on safeguarding the countryside is well known, this may have had an impact.”

The MP added: “Worryingly, the BNP got 5% of the vote in Pendle - without any campaign to speak of. Next door in Burnley, where they were active, they took 11.3%. This is of concern to us all.”

The MP concluded: “The big picture is that the Labour Government has been returned to finish the job it set out to do in 1997. The Conservatives will have to pick themselves up and dust themselves down after their worst drubbing in living memory.”

In a hint of business as usual, the MP added: “My advice surgeries resume on Saturday.”

Note to Editors: Pendle General Elections 1992-2001

	1992	1997	2001
Lab	23497	25059	17729
Con	21384	14235	13454
Lib Dem	7976	5460	5479
anti federalist	263		
referendum		2281	
BNP			1976
UKIP			1094
Turnout	83.08	74.87	63.59

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

For Immediate Release. No 150/01 Thursday 14 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOW FLYING FAST JETS WARNING

Pendle could be buzzed by low flying fast jets next week says local MP, Gordon Prentice. The Ministry of Defence has told him a major exercise is to take place across the UK from Monday 18 June to Friday 29 June.

The MoD told the MP: "Exercise CLEAN HUNTER, designed to test Northern Region main Defence Forces and Reaction forces, is a major cross-border air exercise to test Nato's ability to defend an Area of Responsibility and conduct offensive, defensive and supporting air operations. The UK will participate in the Exercise with aircraft from: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal Turkey, and the US. RAF fast jet aircraft will fly sorties in the UK and take part in exercise activity throughout Europe. Aircraft from the US, France, Germany, Norway, Netherlands, Greece, Portugal and Belgium will be permitted to fly sorties in the UK."

The MoD added: "The Exercise will take place from 18-29 June but there will be no Exercise flying activity on the afternoon of Friday 22 June or during the weekend of 23/24 June in the UK. Fast jet sorties associated may be flown across most of England, Wales and southern Scotland, with the minimum possible amount (of disturbance) commensurate with the aims of the Exercise conducted at low level."

The MP commented: "We all know that low flying fast jets can startle people and animals. That is why advance notice of exercises like this is so essential."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 151/01 Tuesday 19 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FOOT AND MOUTH CRISIS IN PENDLE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to speak to farmers and other local people next week about the unfolding foot and mouth crisis in the area. The MP plans to attend a meeting in Barnoldswick on Friday 29 June - likely to be held in Rainhall Road school at 7pm. (Confirmation of the venue and timing will follow).

Yesterday, the MP wrote to all members of Pendle council following a letter to him from the Council's Chief Executive, Stephen Barnes, in which the Council called for a change in Government policy, moving from culling to vaccination.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: "There is huge concern about the cull in West Craven and I well understand the anxieties people feel. I have heard criticism of the methods used by some of the slaughter teams and I am taking these concerns up with Ministers."

"The local "Foot and Mouth Action Group" is also, I believe, calling for vaccination. The Government has said it would be difficult to do this without full support from the farmers and the veterinary profession - and this has not been forthcoming. The NFU, for example, is split down the middle."

The MP added: "The Government is following the best scientific advice. But we must clearly keep the policy under review. The sight of animals being slaughtered is hugely distressing."

Note to Editors: The pros and cons of vaccination are set out in the DEFRA web site - http://www.maff.gov.uk.

Note 2 to Editors: The Government's position on vaccination was set out in the Commons on 3 May by the former Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown.

more follows

FOOT AND MOUTH CRISIS IN PENDLE

He said: "More than 2.4 m animals have now been slaughtered for disease control purposes. A further 630,000 animals have been slaughtered under the livestock welfare disposal scheme.... What is clear is that our policy was the right one: to bear down on the outbreak swiftly and prevent greater spread of the disease by rapid slaughtering, within 24 hours of the report of a new case, tracing dangerous contacts and tackling the disease on contiguous premises within 48 hours. This has been crucial to the control of the epidemic.

On vaccination, it remains the position that the necessary support among farmers, consumers and the food industry for a vaccination
programme in Cumbria and possibly Devon has not been forthcoming and I cannot see that situation changing now, given the decline in the number of daily confirmed cases. Contingency plans remain in place for the rapid introduction of a vaccination programme should the situation change.

We continue to pay large sums in compensation and other payments to farmers resulting from the foot and mouth outbreak. We have already paid over £100 m pounds in compensation and the latest estimate is that this figure will eventually be over £600 m. The livestock welfare disposal scheme is expected to provide more than £200 m. This is all in addition to the £156 m being paid in agrimonetary compensation to livestock farmers and all the other funding that the Government are providing to support the rural economy and the tourism industry more generally.

Note 3 to Editors: The Conservatives have not called for wholesale vaccination. Likewise, there is no sign that the Liberal Democrats have challenged the Government's policy line. There was nothing in the Lib Dem manifesto about Foot and Mouth and there has certainly been no sign of support for vaccination as an alternative policy to that carried out by the Government. The exception is for rare breeds. Their then Official spokesperson, Colin Breed, issued an official statement on 27 March saying: "The Government must not allow F&M to wipe out rare breeds... The Government must do whatever is necessary to ensure that we preserve the special genetic make-up of these breeds. We must now look at the case for vaccination in these exceptional circumstances.

The Liberal Democrats issued a very recent statement on 14 June 2001 from Malcolm Bruce, the Party's spokesperson for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under the headline "Change of Policy for Treating Foot and Mouth is Unwise". He was "responding to comments made by Jim Scudamore, the Government's Chief Veterinary Officer, that vaccination is still being considered as a method to wipe out F&M after the disease was discovered in previously unaffected areas". Bruce said: "We appreciate that the Government's Chief Veterinary Officer continues to review the options, but recognise that it would be unwise to change the policy at this stage of the disease. However, if the disease continues to spread we will have to look at quarantine and vaccination if we are to avoid the spectre of extensive burying and burial."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 152/01 Wednesday 20 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR EARLY STATEMENT ON FOOT AND MOUTH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon urged the Leader of the House, Robin Cook, to make time for an early Commons statement on the foot and mouth crisis.

The Pendle MP told the weekly meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party at lunchtime today that in his time as Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, had given Commons statements on F&M on 10 occasions, the last time on 3 May.

Given the lapse in time - caused by the election - and the new cases, the MP called on the new Minister, Margaret Beckett to make an urgent statement.

Robin Cook indicated the matter was being actively considered.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "I am hopeful there will be a statement tomorrow. If not I shall certainly raise the matter next Tuesday when we debate rural affairs in the Queen's Speech."

Last Friday, the MP wrote to Margaret Beckett urging her to visit the area in Pendle hit by the latest flare up of F&M.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 153/01 Wednesday 20 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

QUEEN'S SPEECH 2001

This Queen's Speech has 20 bills, 4 draft bills and 1 bill for which legislation is being prepared. The Bills are listed below:

Adoption and Children. Cuts delays in adoption through national adoption register and court timetables. Places duty on local authorities for an adoption support service. Gives new right for an assessment for adoption support to new adoptive families. Provides for independent review mechanism for adoption applicants. Improves legal controls on intercountry adoption, including over the internet

Commonhold and Leasehold Provides way of allowing people in interdependent properties to own freehold. Gives right for leaseholders to take over management of building without having to prove landlord fault or pay compensation on new contracts. Makes it easier for leaseholders to buy their freeholds. More leaseholders will qualify for right to buy, with simpler valuation rules.

Communications (publish in draft) Establishes Ofcom, new regulatory body to take over functions of current 5 regulators. Increases dynamism of communications market through competition measures. Establishes general Ofcom duty to protect consumers. Deregulates by replacing operators' prior licensing rrequirement with Ofcom rules. Maintains diversity with new policy on cross-media ownership

Criminal Courts (publish in draft) Puts in place recommendations from Auld review to modernise criminal court procedure and reform the criminal justice system

Criminal Justice Modernises and reforms laws on sentencing following Halliday review. Enables acquitted murder retrial where there is compelling evidence of guilt. Modernises and reforms aspects of criminal law, including rules of evidence. Strengthens protection against sex offenders by tightening up registration requirements Reforms law on corruption, including bribery of MPs and foreign officials

EC (Amendment) Main points: Ratifies Nice Treaty opening the way to EU enlargement. Gives more power to Britain through vote reweighting in Council of Ministers. Delivers a smaller and more effective European

more follows

QUEEN'S SPEECH 2001 (cont p2)

Commission. Secures more qualified majority voting in areas where this is in Britain's interests. Secures a more flexible EU

EC (Finance) Enables UK to adopt EU financing decisions taken at 1999 Berlin European Council. Maintains in full UK EU rebate. Changes the financing arrangements of rebate. Reduces UK VAT-based EU payments.

Education Measures to make further improvements in school standards, especially at secondary level. Increases school diversity, & increases schools' autonomy. Enables faith, business and voluntary sector sponsors to support existing schools. Clarifies admissions law to maximise parental preference. Promotes a range of high quality academic and vocational pathways for pupils over 14

Enterprise Transfers merger decisions to independent competition authorities. Strengthens Office of Fair Trading. Improves deterrents to anti-competitive behaviour, including criminal penalties for cartels. Provides new powers to deal with rogue traders. Reforms personal bankruptcy to give second chances to no-fault honest bankrupts

Export Control and Non-Proliferation Modernises export control powers. Establishes purpose for which export control powers can be used. Provides for clear Parliamentary scrutiny of export control powers. Establishes licensing system for arms trafficking and brokering.

Finance Legislation to enact measures in the Budget

Football (Disorder) Extends life of current anti-hooliganism measures. Longer lifespan for police powers to prevent known troublemakers from travelling. Extends power of courts to impose football banning orders on individuals who have previously caused violence or disorder.

House of Lords Second stage of Lords reform, following consultation. Establishes electoral system for regionally elected element of Lords. Sets up new Lords appointments process. Removes remaining hereditary peers. Sets out rules for determining balance of political parties in the Lords.

Hunting In accordance with the Government's commitment, the new Parliament will be given an opportunity to express its view by a free vote.

International Development Establishes in law the reduction of poverty as central aim of UK international development assistance. Makes unlawful 'tied aid' - use of aid for improper commercial or political ends. Provides new powers to achieve poverty reduction. Enables support for organisations taking on development awareness activities. Allows for more effective engagement with private sector on development issues

Land Registration Modernises entire land registration legislation to make conveyancing quicker and simpler. Streamlines system which underpins £2,000billion property market. New regulations to help mortgages and land and property sales. Facilitates electronic conveyancing of properties including online land title investigation. Reforms law on squatters' rights on registered land.

more follows

QUEEN'S SPEECH 2001 (cont p3)

NHS reform and Decentralisation NHS modernisation. Decentralises
NHS power to frontline - 75% of NHS spending power to frontline. Provides for NHS funding to be allocated direct to Primary Care Trusts. Modernises and strengthens mechanisms for patient power in the NHS. Reforms professional self-regulation in health to strengthen patient protection

NHS (Wales) (publish in draft) Reforms NHS in Wales in line with NHS Plan for Wales agreed by National Assembly. Establishes local health partnerships for Wales to oversee primary and community health. Sets up independent complaints panel for those dissatisfied with internal NHS inquiries. Establishes strategic planning boards to promote joint working across NHS in Wales. Creates Wales Centre for Health on public health issues

Pension Credit Provides for the introduction of the new Pension Credit. Replaces Income Support for pensioners. Provides a more generous and less intrusive means test. Guaranteed level of pensioner income - no pensioner need live on less than £100 a week. Payment designed to reward pensioners with modest savings or second pensions

Police Helps the police fight crime. Establishes new, more accessible and more open police complaints system. Ensures police can co-operate effectively across police force boundaries.

Proceeds of Crime Establishes Criminal Assets Recovery Agency. Provides powers to confiscate proceeds of crime. Provides for the taxation of suspected criminal assets. Modernises law on money laundering.

Safety (publish in draft) Puts in place recommendations from Cullen review on rail safety

Tax Credit Introduces new Integrated Tax Credit for families with children. Brings together child elements from Income Support, Jobseekers' Allowance, Working Families Tax Credit and Children's Tax Credit. Introduces new Employment Tax Credit.

Travel Concessions (Eligibility) Extends eligibility for reduced travel fares to men aged 60-64. Will benefit 1million men. Brings to 8million the number of people benefitting from statutory travel concessions. At a minimum they will have half-price bus fares. Moves faster than existing legislation, which would otherwise not equalise until 2010

Welfare Reform Requires partners of people on benefit to attend work-focused interviews. Looks to extend Employment Zones to those sick & disabled people capable of work. Brings forward proposals on Incapacity benefit to ensure people get the right support, including help where appropriate for those who may be able to return to employment while ensuring that those who are unable to work continue to receive support. Improves maternity benefits and maternity provisions.

Women's Representation (prepare legislation) Legislation to be prepared to allow political parties to make positive moves to increase representation of women in public life.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 154/01 Thursday 21 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION INTO FOOT AND MOUTH CULL "EXCESSIVE CRUELTY" CLAIM

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, this afternoon tackled the new rural affairs Minister, Margaret Beckett, about claims that the cull of foot and mouth animals in the West Craven area had been carried out with "excessive cruelty".

Prentice was speaking during the first Commons statement on foot and mouth since the election.

The MP told the House that he had received letters from horrified constituents angry at how the animals had been treated. The MP said people had pointed an accusing finger at one team of slaughter men - the so called "Liverpool team".

The MP also called for disinfectant baths to be provided on country roads in infected areas like Pendle. He was responding to the Minister's earlier pleas for tough bio-security to continue with no easing up on measures essential for the control of the disease.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "I welcome the Government's commitment to an inquiry into how foot and mouth took hold and spread like wildfire. It is essential we understand what went wrong and why. We also need to look at the slaughter policy and at alternatives such as vaccination. The Minister indicated that there will be a review of the disease control procedures in the Autumn and that is obviously essential."

The MP invited the Minister to come to Pendle to meet those affected by the crisis.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 155/01 Thursday 21 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP HAILS BEACON SCHOOL STATUS FOR WALTON LANE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news today that Walton Lane Nursery School in his Pendle constituency is to receive beacon school status.

It is one of 425 schools that will receive beacon status from September 2001.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "I am absolutely delighted. I have been a frequent visitor to Walton Lane and I know what a tremendous job they do there. It is marvellous."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 156/01 Monday 25 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE FARMERS MEET AGRICULTURE MINISTER

A group of Pendle farmers whose livestock has been culled following the foot and mouth outbreak in the area put their concerns to the new Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Minister, Margaret Beckett at a special meeting in Gisburn today.

The farmers were joined by local MP, Gordon Prentice, who was determined to ensure the Minister heard the voice of Pendle farmers who had been through the trauma of losing their animals to the dread disease - as well as those from other stricken areas.

The Minister met a group of about 20 farmers drawn from the so-called Settle/Clitheroe rectangle as well as the Pendle farmers. In a separate meeting she also discussed the problems facing the ancillary industries such as livestock auctions, tourism, pubs and hotels and holiday cottages.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “There was a huge number of issues raised. Inevitably, people talked about the cull and its immediate aftermath, but, overwhelmingly, the farmers focused on the future.”

“Clearly, everyone is calling for more resources and we do need extra help. Tourism as well as farming has been dealt a body blow and we really need to pull out all the stops to make sure both sectors recover.”

The Minister reassured the farmers that the Government wanted to see a thriving agricultural sector. The top priority she said was to defeat the disease.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 157/01 Tuesday 26 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP SUPPORTS ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS WEEK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today lent his support for people with dementia and their carers in Pendle, in the run up to Alzheimer's Awareness Week. The theme of the week, which runs from 1 - 7 July, is 'Everyday Matters'. The Society aims to raise awareness of the impact dementia has on everyday life and how people with dementia and their carers cope.

The MP said: "I am very happy to be supporting the Alzheimer's Society in their Awareness Week. It is all about publicising the effect that dementia has, not only for the sufferer themselves, but on the people who care for them."

He continued: "Having Alzheimer's is life changing - but not life-stopping. It affects the ability to think, to remember, to speak and make decisions. Everyday events such as catching a bus or going shopping can become enormous challenges."

The MP said: "We estimate that around 810 people living in Pendle have dementia. Their lives and those of the people who care for them can be difficult to cope with. This is a disease that could hit any one of us and I hope we will all learn a little bit more about its impact and have a greater understanding for those affected."

For anyone who would like information and advice on Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia you can call the Alzheimer's Society national help line on 0845 300 0336 or visit their web-site at www.alzheimers.org.uk

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 158/01 Tuesday 26 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR CALM AFTER BURNLEY RIOTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for calm following the disturbances in Burnley, the town next door to his Pendle constituency.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “What has been happening in Burnley over the last three days is tragic. Over the years we have worked hard to build good community relations and I don’t want to see that, quite literally, going up in smoke. In East Lancashire we’ve had a good record of living in harmony.”

“Of course, there are huge problems facing not just Burnley but East Lancashire as a whole. We have some of the worst housing in Britain. There is a lot of deprivation. But the Government is determined to help us tackle these problems.”

The MP added: “We’ve all got to get along together. There is no other way.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 159/01 Tuesday 21 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SAYS LOCAL LIB DEMS SHOULD COME CLEAN ON VACCINATION POLICY FOR FOOT AND MOUTH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, fired a broadside at Pendle’s leading Liberal Democrats when he told the Commons today that Lord Tony Greaves - the Lib Dem

spokesperson on rural affairs in the Lords - and County Councillor David Whipp were publicly promoting a campaign for immediate vaccination - despite the fact it runs counter to their Party's national policy.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "If they disagree with their own Party's official policy they should say so - as I would."

The MP said the "jab don't cull" campaign had been launched at a public meeting in Barnoldswick on Friday 15 June. On 14 June the Liberal Democrats issued an official statement under the heading: "Change of Policy for Treating Foot and Mouth is Unwise". The Lib Dem rural affairs spokesman in the Commons, Malcolm Bruce, said: "We appreciate that the Government's Chief Veterinary Officer continues to review the options (ie for vaccination), but recognise that it would be unwise to change the policy at this stage of the disease."

Prentice told the Commons: "Foot and mouth struck Pendle on 9th, 10th and 11th June. Until then, the A59 which separates Pendle from Ribble Valley had been a firebreak but that was breached.
Three infected farms and 16 contiguous farms, lying in a horseshoe around Barnoldswick, were culled out. There are five other cases involving contiguous farms where the infected farm lies outside the constituency. We have seen separate dangerous contact cases in Barrowford and up above Colne. Fortunately, we have had no funeral pyres and the culled animals have all been taken away to be rendered."

more follows

FOOT AND MOUTH

The Secretary of State, Margaret Beckett, met Pendle farmers in Gisburn yesterday. The MP said he thought the farmers found the meeting useful. He listed the areas of concern. He said that first and foremost farmers wanted reassurance they had a future in farming. Other questions posed during the 50 minute meeting concerned, for example: •restocking - would there be a cap on numbers? • The proposed 20 day movement ban - this would have a dramatic impact on farming • Compensation was not getting through to farmers quickly enough.

The Pendle MP welcomed the Government's decision to have an inquiry. He said he wanted a "focused inquiry" on how foot and mouth started and spread. He lambasted the Conservatives who demanded an inquiry despite the fact they chose not to hold one into BSE. That was a decision of the present Government.

The MP also touched on the separate meeting on the impact on rural economy.
He said £1.2 billion had been lost to the North West economy since the crisis began. He also wanted to know which towns had been successful in the "market towns" initiative. Earby and Barnoldswick were in the running.

Note to Editors: The Chief Vet, Jim Scudamore, set out the pros and cons of vaccination in his evidence to the Agriculture Select Committee on 21 March this year.

He said there could be emergency vaccination or routine vaccination. "With emergency vaccination you would still continue the stamping out policy. Cases would still be dealt with by slaughter and disposal. You would still have to slaughter at some stage all the vaccinated animals to get the disease

free status back - or you would have to regionalise the country with movement controls between the regions. With routine vaccination you vaccinate and let the disease run its course. It becomes endemic and "you would only be allowed to export beef provided it was de-boned and it was matured and you would not be allowed to export pig meat or sheep meat". He mentioned rules on genetic material, milk and so on.

He went on to say: "If we went to routine vaccination and we did not slaughter animals and we had no disease we would have to go two years from the time we stopped vaccination before we could be considered free again. With no vaccination, three months after the last cases the UK would get its disease free status back and we would be able to sell in the EU and on the world market.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 160/01 Wednesday 27 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MARKET TOWN INITIATIVE GETS OFF THE GROUND

A key meeting involving people from Pendle Council and Barnoldswick Town Centre Forum takes place in Clitheroe this Friday 29 June. The group are involved in putting together plans for the future of Barnoldswick.

The meeting comes following the announcement made recently that Barnoldswick has joined the new Market Towns Initiative. Funding will be available for a 'Healthcheck' for the town. The healthcheck will help local communities to assess the economic, environmental and social state of their town and surrounding community. It will result in a high quality action plan for long term improvement work.

Over the next six months, both the Countryside Agency and the Northwest Development Agency will work with the council and the local community partnerships in working on the plan.

The MP, who lives in Barnoldswick, said: "Everyone involved in this initiative has their sleeves rolled up ready to get things moving. The local community will be getting top-notch support to develop a plan to revitalise the Barnoldswick area."

He continued: "Pressures from out of town shopping complexes, the loss of traditional sources of employment and lack of past investment have all contributed to a decline for many market towns. We need to do everything we can to reverse this and the 'Healthcheck' is a good start."

The MP said: "Barnoldswick has had its difficulties recently dealing with the Foot and Mouth crisis. But the town and surrounding area has still got a lot going for it and with this new initiative we can build on its strengths."

The town of Earby, which also expressed an interest in the Market Towns initiative, has been offered assistance in the preparation of their own action plans through the Countryside Agency's Parish and Town Plans programme. The details of this will be announced later this Summer.

Contact: pager 07644 05297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 161/01 Wednesday 27 June 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FISHY GOINGS-ON AT WOODFIELD NURSERY!
Photocall Woodfield Nursery School, Sefton Street, Brierfield, Saturday 30 June 11.30am

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is dropping in at Woodfield Nursery School on Saturday as they celebrate their 50 years anniversary. The school have been marking the event with a variety of community art activities for both the children and their parents. These included creating a den made from willow, a textured handprint banner and a visit from a music maker.

The MP has been invited to unveil another artistic creation in the form of a wall mural of four large fish!

He said: "I am very much looking forward to my visit on Saturday. Woodfield Nursery has long proved to be an asset to the community and I am proud to be included in their celebrations."

He did however admit to some apprehension: "It will be the first time I have had to unveil a fish, I just hope it has no intentions of biting!."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 162/01 Tuesday 3 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LANCASHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE - ONE OF THE BEST

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has today congratulated the Lancashire Ambulance Service for its success in delivering a first class service. In a letter to the MP, the Chief Executive, David Hill, revealed that the Lancashire Ambulance Service is one of only two rural services in England to meet the 'emergency response targets'. He said 77.3% of life threatening calls were reached within 8 minutes and 97.6% of all other calls in less than 20 minutes. Both these figures exceed the targets laid down for them by the patient's charter standard.

The MP said: "The Lancashire Ambulance Service is doing a great job. The number of calls to our emergency services goes up each year and it is no small task to achieve the very high targets set in responding to them."

He continued: "The new technology such as computer links with ambulance stations will help maintain the high standard that Lancashire has already set. Lancashire Ambulance Service has a proud reputation as being one of the best and most respected services in the country. They are determined to keep it that way."

He concluded: "We all have a shared objective - to see our health service deliver top quality care in the most efficient way possible."

Note to Editors: The Lancashire Ambulance Service was one of the first ambulance services in the UK - other than a small number of pilot sites - to prioritise its response to 999 calls. The Patient's Charter Standard requires ambulance services to respond to 75% of life threatening calls within 8 minutes and 95% of all other calls within 19 minutes.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 164/01 Tuesday 3 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS INQUIRY INTO FOOT AND MOUTH

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has told the farming and agriculture Minister, Margaret Beckett, that he wants to see a "short focused inquiry" into the foot and mouth epidemic.

In a letter today to Margaret Beckett, the MP cautions against a BSE style inquiry which could take a couple of years and "cost a small fortune". The MP also listed concerns raised at the public meeting last Friday held in Barnoldswick which attracted farmers from all over the country.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The Barlick meeting called vociferously for vaccination and an end to contiguous culling. I happen to disagree with this view. I think things are more complicated than that. But I have passed a paper from Dr Ruth Watkins who was present at the Barlick meeting - and who argues this view - to the Minister for evaluation."

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on 3 July as follows: "We met in Gisburn on Monday 25 June to discuss the impact of Foot & Mouth in Lancashire and the adjacent parts of North Yorkshire. It was good of you to come to the area to hear, first hand, the views of those most affected such as the farmers from Pendle who have been in the front line. You will also know from our earlier conversation, that I had a public meeting in Barnoldswick on Friday 29 June and I promised to pass on the views that were expressed.

It was a spirited meeting of about 200 people, with farmers and others present many of whom came from way beyond my Pendle constituency. The meeting was organised by the Foot and Mouth Action Group - an organisation with local branches which has sprung up in various parts of the country. I have already been in touch with you about the issue and I have had sight of a letter dated 19 June to you from a constituent and member of the group, which calls for immediate vaccination and an end to the policy of contiguous culling, amongst other things.

more follows

MP BACKS INQUIRY INTO FOOT AND MOUTH (2)

I explained the Government's position, saying it bas been guided throughout by the best scientific advice available. You will know that the Parliamentary Scientific Committee met on 27 June here at Westminster which gave MPs and Peers the opportunity to quiz the leading academics advising the Government. This was very helpful. Professor David King, the Chief Scientific Adviser, took us through the history of the outbreak, explaining that foot & mouth was more infectious than any other animal disease. He said the epidemiologists had formed the view that the outbreak could be brought under control by culling the infected farms within 24 hours and the contiguous farms within 48 hours.

Professor Roy Anderson, the epidemiologist from Imperial College also spoke and confirmed this was his view. We heard that the Prime Minister had asked for advice on the vaccination option on 29 March. I told the meeting that vaccination had always been an option under active consideration, but without the full support of the farming community, compulsory vaccination would have been extremely difficult.

Professor Chris Bostock from the Institute of Animal Health talked about the "extreme variability" of the virus, indicating that protection against one strain did not automatically protect against others. He took us through the benefits of vaccination - which confers rapid immunity and reduces the amount of virus produced - but also pointed to the disadvantages. He indicated that a vaccinated animal could still be a carrier and pass the disease on. Clearly, a top priority must be the development of a vaccine which eliminates the carrier state.

I mention all this because at the meeting in Barnoldswick on Friday we had a presentation from a retired virologist, Dr. Ruth Watkins - who is in favour of immediate vaccination - and I am enclosing a copy of the paper that she presented. She simply cannot understand why the Government does not adopt immediately a policy of vaccination and persuade our EU partners to do likewise.

Dr. Watkins is new to farming and until her retirement last November she had worked for two years as a consultant virologist at Hammersmith Hospital and ten years at St. Mary's Hospital. She is obviously a doctor of great distinction and her calls for vaccination had a ready response. I would be grateful if you could have a look at Dr. Watkins' paper and let me have your views.

Also present at the meeting, and on the platform with me, was Lord Greaves who has recently been appointed a spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats on Rural Affairs in the House of Lords. He told the meeting that he personally is in favour of vaccination. As you know, Malcolm Bruce, who speaks for the Liberal Democrats in the Commons, issued a statement on June 14 indicating that they were not in favour of moving to a policy of vaccination.

Perhaps I can now turn to some of the points raised at the meeting on 29 June. There were huge concerns about the cost of the culling policy and much speculation about how much was being paid to slaughter men. The meeting was told that the leading experts on foot and mouth had, apparently, been sidelined. Alexander Donaldson and Paul Kitchen were

more follows

MP BACKS INQUIRY INTO FOOT AND MOUTH (3)

cited as an example and the meeting was told they both had an impressive track record. There were also concerns expressed about the proposed movement restrictions upon which the Government is currently consulting. The meeting was told that this would make life very difficult for livestock farmers.

As many of the farmers who spoke were from outside my constituency, I told them they should contact heir own MPs with firm details of some of their allegations. I am thinking here of an astonishing claim, but believed with absolute certainty, that the virus was being spread on purpose. We would all be interested in any information the Government has on this.

There were also concerns that the culling policy was a surreptitious way of advancing the Government's real agenda which some claimed is a reduction in the number of livestock in the UK. We also heard from a farmer from Grassington that, apparently, a vet in New Zealand had been contacted last November - well before the outbreak - to be told that his services may be required to deal with foot and mouth.

There were views expressed about the competence of the vets brought over by DEFRA, although I indicated that the State Veterinary Service on its own
could not cope and additional vets were required and it was a question of the Government being damned if it did and damned if it didn't. I would,
nevertheless, be interested in any information you may have about any special factors such as language difficulties, which may have caused problems. Clearly, all these allegations have to be documented. There are millions of rumours, but I wait to see the hard evidence.

The meeting also touched on the question of compensation - and not just :for farmers. I made the point that people would be chasing moonbeams if they thought the Government would be in a position to compensate everyone who had lost business or income as a result of foot and mouth. I recall that in Gisburn you said the best way of reviving the countryside was to stamp out the outbreak quickly and get people visiting rural areas again. I agree.

Finally, people were keen that there should be a Public Inquiry. As, you know, this is my own view, though I certainly do not want to see a BSE style inquiry lasting two years and costing a small fortune. I told the meeting that a relatively short focused inquiry is what we should aim for.

I hope you find these observations helpful.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 165/01 Tuesday 3 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP DEMANDS MORE HELP FOR EAST LANCS HOUSING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, fired a broadside at the Government today when he demanded more help to tackle East Lancashire's looming housing crisis.

He told newly appointed Housing Minister, Sally Keeble, that one in five houses across the region were unfit and that 6% of the housing stock in his own Pendle constituency was empty. He asked the Minister: "Will the Cabinet and the Prime Minister accept that the housing conditions in East Lancashire are uniquely appalling and that urgent help is need to tackle the problem."

The MP told the House that housing was a policy area that had been inadequately addressed by the Government.

The Minister said the Government had allocated £9.7m to help improve housing in East Lancs - a sum dubbed "not enough" by Prentice. In Pendle alone it has been estimated £150m is needed to deal with unfitness within the private sector housing stock.

Speaking after the Commons exchange, the MP said: "We have had Ministerial visits to Pendle but now we want something more concrete. A new drive to bring our crumbling housing stock up top scratch. In some places in Pendle the housing market has collapsed and you can't give houses away."

The MP added: “The Government has made a commitment to bring social and council housing up to standard in ten years. That is great news but owner occupation is the norm here. We are living with the dereliction of the past.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 167/01 Monday 9 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TOLD: VACCINATION AGAINST FOOT AND MOUTH KEPT UNDER CONTINUOUS REVIEW

Ministers have told local MP, Gordon Prentice, that vaccination against foot and mouth is an option that will be kept under continuous review. The MP wanted to know if the Government had contingency plans to authorise a programme of vaccination against the dread disease which has hit his Pendle constituency hard.

Rural Affairs Minister, Elliot Morley, told the MP today: “The Government would be prepared to authorise a programme of vaccination based on the advice of the Chief Scientific Advisor and Chief Veterinary Officer. At an earlier stage of the outbreak, their advice was to vaccinate cattle in Cumbria and Devon provided the campaign had the substantial support of farmers, consumers, veterinarians, and the food trade. That level of support was simply not there and, as the number of new cases fell, the signs were that it would not be achieved. Vaccination remains an option, however, and is kept under continuous review.”

Gordon Prentice commented: “Vaccination is not an easy option. If we were to go down that road we would have to vaccinate and then slaughter the animals. Otherwise foot and mouth would become endemic and this would throw up a range of new issues.”

The MP also quizzed the Minister on the incidence of F&M in the deer population - an issue that had been raised at the public meeting in the St Joseph’s Parish Centre in Barnoldswick on 29 June.

The Minister said: “All cloven-hoofed animals, including deer, are susceptible to foot and mouth disease. Wild deer tend to show

more follows
VACCINATION AGAINST FOOT AND MOUTH

mild or inapparent disease, resembling the disease in sheep, although some species (e.g.. roe deer and muntjak deer in the UK) may be severely affected."

"Deer can be carriers of the foot and mouth virus, and could transmit foot and mouth disease to susceptible livestock during the clinical stages of the disease. However, the Department's current veterinary risk assessment indicates that the risk of wild deer playing any significant part in the spread of foot and mouth disease is very low. There are therefore no plans at this stage to control wild deer populations although as more information becomes available about the epidemiology of the disease in areas where there are wild deer, the risk assessment will be updated."

"As of 2 July more than 60 samples have been submitted to the Institute of Animal Health for testing from various parts of England and Scotland. All have tested negative for evidence of the foot and mouth virus, antigens or antibodies."

Note to Editors: Much of the information from Government to farmers is now posted on the internet. The latest information available was collected in April and May 2000 as part of a research study into "MAFF's Role in E-Business". At that time the level of internet use among livestock farmers in the survey was estimated to be between 40 and 45%. Further details of the survey results are available at: http://www.defra.gov.uk/ebus/maffrole/annexa.htm

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 168/01 Tuesday 10 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ARMS EXPORT CONTROL REFORMS "LONG OVERDUE"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the Government's plans to tighten up the controls on arms exports. He says the reforms are long overdue. The Export Control Bill, debated in the Commons yesterday, will completely overhaul and modernise the legislative framework governing strategic export controls.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Rolls Royce, a major employer in Pendle, supports the Bill. But the company has told me it hopes the same rules will apply in EU countries and in the United States as will operate here - otherwise it could be put at a commercial disadvantage. That is a very fair point. I want to see a regime which

binds all EU countries and the United States in a common set of rules. The UK defence industry employs thousands of people and is an important part of our manufacturing base."

The Bill responds to key recommendations made in the Scott Report, on the need for increased transparency and accountability in export controls. It contains important new powers to control arms trafficking and brokering, intangible technology transfers and provision of technical assistance overseas.

Note to Editors: The Government has delivered a series of significant improvements to the export control regime since 1997 that have not required new legislation. These include the introduction of tough new arms export licensing criteria and a unilateral ban on the export of equipment used for torture in July 1997, the instrumental role the UK played in securing an EU Code of Conduct on arms exports in June 1998 and our widely-welcomed introduction of an Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls, which is more transparent and detailed than the reports of any other EU Member State. The Government also moved quickly to ban the import, export, manufacture and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 169/01 Tuesday 10 July 2001
www.gordonprentice mp.com

MP SUPPORTS BAN ON TRADE IN DOG & CAT FUR

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for a ban on the trade in dog and cat fur in the UK and the EU.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "There is an urgent need for action because of the United States' recent ban on the import of products made from dog and cat fur. This means that more dog and cat fur is likely to find its way into the EU and the UK, where the trade is currently quite legal and there are no labelling requirements."

"Most dog a cat fur comes from the Far East and I think the majority of people in this country would be sickened at the thought of the estimated 2,000,000 dogs and cats

killed annually as part of this trade. Such fur is not easy to distinguish from other furs such as fox, rabbit and mink and is usually less expensive. This provides an incentive for importers to use this fur. It is used to make clothing, decorative accessories, stuffed toys and pet toys"

The MP went on to say: "Whilst I am not in favour of any animal fur being used in this way, I find the use of dog and cat fur particularly repugnant and I want to see a ban on this trade ".

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 170/01 Tuesday 10 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS DRIVE TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED ORGAN DONORS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today added his support to the drive to increase the number of organ donors. Next week is National Transplant Week.

Last year, he answered the call from the NHS to become an organ donor and has registered his name on a computerised national list.

The MP said: "Like a lot of people, it was something I thought about doing but never got round to. The widening gap between numbers on the waiting list and organs available for transplant was the spur for me to put my name forward."

"The aim now is to double the number of registered donors from 8 million to 16 million by 2010. In the UK organs from 900 donors give a new lease of life to more than 3,000 people every year and a further 3,000 have their sight restored."

The MP said: "Although many people already carry donor cards or are on the NHS Organ Donor Register, more are needed. The huge success of heart, liver and kidney transplants mean they are now commonplace."

The most successful transplants come from organs donated from within the recipient's own ethnic group because of the importance of matching tissues in organ donation. There is no maximum age for some donations and having an existing medical condition does not necessarily prevent a person from becoming a donor.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 171/01 Wednesday 11 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

COATES LANE PRIMARY GETS NEW CLASSROOM

The Government announced today an extra £30 million to build 283 new junior classrooms at 216 schools - including one at Coates Lane Primary School in Barnoldswick. Local MP, Gordon Prentice, who lives in the town, says he is delighted with the news.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “The money is for schools which increased their intake in order to meet the Government's infant class size pledge. It is great news.”

This Government's infant class pledge for 2002 - for all five, six and seven year olds to be in infant classes of 30 or fewer - will be met for the start of the new school year this September. To implement this landmark target considerable resources have been made available to reduce the size of infant classes, which means that many schools were able to take in more pupils and give more parents their first choice of school.

The MP added: “The classrooms which will be needed from September 2002 as infants in the expanded schools enter their junior classes, show the Government’s commitment to getting class sizes down."

Note to Editors: Extra investment in teachers and support Staff for junior class has reduced average Key Stage 2 class sizes for 8 to 11 year olds - from 28.4 in January 1999 to 27.9 in January 2001. The proportion of 8 to 11 year olds in classes of over 30 fell to 35% in January 2001.

The ratio of pupils to adults in primary classes has improved from 17.9 in 1997 to 16.8 in 2000 to 15.7 in 2001 with investment in teaching assistants continuing.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 173/01 Tuesday 17 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

OUT OF SIGHT BUT NOT OUT OF MIND!

Local MP Gordon Prentice has today welcomed the news that the installation of the new water main in Foulridge will soon be completed. The MP has been pressing North West Water for years to fix the pipe, once labelled the leakiest main in Lancashire, and is now delighted the work is being done.

The MP said: "Just because the water main is hidden underground does not mean it has been out of my mind. I am now just pleased that finally the work is goin ahead and will be completed with weeks/days????"

The amount of water that goes to waste through leakage is simply staggering. The water companies make vast profits and some of this money should be reinvested in the infrastructure."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 173/01 Wednesday 11 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GUIDANCE FOR WORKING ROYALS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for more information on how the new guidanlines for working members of the Royal Family will work in practice.

In a motion which appears on the Commons Order Paper today, the MP "regrets the decision of Buckingham Palace not to proceed with a register of royal business interests along the lines of the House of Commons Register of Members' Interests". The Motion says the new arrangements "may still allow hostages to fortune" and should be reviewed by a Commons Committee.

In April, in the wake of the controversy over the business affairs of the Countess of Wessex , dramatically captured by the News of the World's "fake sheikh", the MP called for the setting up of a royal register of business interests.

Note to Editors: The Commons motion reads: That this House notes with regret the decision of Buckingham Palace not to proceed with a register of royal business interests along the lines of the House of Commons Register of Members' Interests but instead to introduce voluntary unpublished guidelines on how the business affairs of working members of the Royal Family might be so arranged in future so as to avoid any suggestion of a conflict of interest with their representational roles; further notes that Lord Luce, the Lord Chamberlain, Sir Richard Peat, the Keeper of the Privy Purse and Sir Robin Janvrin, The Queen's Private Secretary, reportedly took advice from business circles in formulating the guidelines and recommended that working members of the Royal Family refer any new business activities to the Lord Chamberlain for approval; considers that the new arrangements may still allow hostages to fortune; and urges the Select Committee on Public Administration to review the new guidance at an early date and invite Lord Luce and others involved in administering the guidance to explain how it will operate in practice.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 174/01 Tuesday 17 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP GOES 'ON THE BUSES'

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, yesterday cut the ribbon on one of Burnley and Pendle's new double decker buses at Colne bus station. The MP was there at the invitation of Blazefield Holdings and their Chief Executive Giles Fearnley joined him at the event.

The MP said: “These new buses are marvellous. The way to get people out of their cars is to run clean, safe and reliable public transport. The bus I travelled on had CCTV, disabled access and I can personally vouch for the comfortable seating!”

He continued: “The bus service in Pendle has been through a difficult period with former owners Stagecoach but we are all now hopeful for a fresh start with Blazefield.”

The company have a total of 105 buses at the Burnley depot with 40 new buses. They have entered into a ‘Quality Partnership’ with Lancashire County Council where the Council is committed to making it easier for buses to run on time by, for example, introducing ‘red rectangles’ denoting the bus stop. In return Blazefield are committed to providing a modern bus fleet.

The MP said: “This partnership is a win-win situation for Blazefield and Lancashire County Council. But perhaps more importantly the travelling public should see a more efficient service.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 175/01 Tuesday 17 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ELTEC CASH MUST BE USED IN EAST LANCS - MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is demanding that cash and assets belonging to ELTEC (East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council) which has now been wound up, should be returned to East Lancashire rather than disappear into the balance sheet of the new Learning and Skills Council based in Preston.

The MP quizzed Work and Pensions Minister, John Healey, asking him to list the assets and financial surpluses that were transferred from ELTEC to the Learning and Skills Council for Lancashire.

The Minister told the Pendle MP: **“**East Lancashire TEC (ELTEC) has transferred £7000 worth of its computers and other equipment to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for Lancashire as well as providing similar support to the new Business Link in Lancashire. The transfer of any cash surpluses will be finalised after the TEC has

completed its statutory accounts for the year ended March 2001 and appointed a liquidator to wind up the company."

"Current estimates suggest that some £1.4m will be made available to the Lancashire LSC to take forward local initiatives in East Lancashire and a further £1.3m will go to support Individual Learning Accounts for local people."

Gordon Prentice commented: "This is reassuring. The assets of ELTEC must be used to benefit East Lancashire. There were real fears that the cash would disappear into a large pot and be used elsewhere."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 176/01 Thursday 19 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP ELECTED ON TO KEY COMMITTEE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has been voted on to a key Parliamentary Committee at his first attempt. The PLP's "Parliamentary Committee" meets weekly with the Prime Minister to discuss the issues of the day.

The Parliamentary Committee is elected annually by all Labour MPs. It is a key link between the back benches and leadership.

Speaking after his election, the MP said: "A lot of Labour MPs feel completely left out of the loop. I am interested in process and procedures - how decisions are made and who takes them. The recent furore over Select Committees and who sits on them makes it more important then ever to shine a light into this shadowy area of the constitution and Prime Ministerial patronage."

"My election - in a secret ballot of all Labour MPs - will give me an opportunity to quiz the Prime Minister on a weekly basis about how things are going and to give him some straight from the shoulder advice. Labour MPs are his best focus group."

The Pendle MP has also been appointed to the Public Administration Select Committee. The Committee has a wide remit and has, in the past, inquired into issues such as freedom of information, quangos, and complaints against public bodies.

The MP added: “I am delighted to be on this very influential Select Committee. But the way in which MPs are put on Select Committees is crying out for reform. People are getting thoroughly sick of patronage and how it is wielded.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 177/01 Thursday 19 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP RENEWS CALL FOR MS DRUG TO BE MADE AVAILABLE ON NHS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has renewed his call for beta interferon to be made available on the NHS to people with MS who could benefit from the drug.

He is backing a Commons motion urging the National Institute for Clinical Excellence swiftly to recommend that the drug should be prescribed in the National Health Service according to the guidelines issued by the Association of British Neurologists and for the Government to accept the recommendation.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “This whole business has been dragging on for far too long. We need a decision.”

The MP is secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Group on MS and is President of the Pendle and Burnley Branch of the MS Society.

Note to Editors: The Commons motion reads: That this House notes with concern the decision by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence to delay its final report on the NHS use of disease modifying drugs (beta interferon and glatiramer acetate) in multiple sclerosis; further notes that the appraisal process will have taken nearly two years to reach a decision on licensed drugs which have been widely prescribed in other countries for a number of years; recognises that this delay will mean some people with multiple sclerosis will accumulate levels of irreversible disability which will put them beyond the point at which they may benefit from these drugs; and calls upon the National Institute for Clinical Excellence swiftly to recommend that these drugs should be prescribed in the National Health Service according to the guidelines issued by the Association of British Neurologists and for the Government to accept the recommendation.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 179/01 Wednesday 18 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE UNEMPLOYMENT STABLE

The number of people out of work in Pendle in June and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,373 - slightly down from 1,376 in May 2001. This represents an unemployment rate of 4.0%. There were 1,026 men and 347 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count has again fallen and now stands at 963,700. Employment now stands at a record 28,180,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "Pendle jobless figures have fallen slightly this month. The national figure has fallen by 130,700 over the year and is now the lowest since 1975. However, we will have to wait and see what effect the foot and mouth crisis has on numbers over the coming months."

Following the General Election, employment now comes under the remit of the new Department for Work and Pensions. Minister for work, Nick Brown, said: "The new Department is particularly focusing its efforts on the number of inactive people and removing the barriers to their employment. As well as making sure they know about the jobs available we are providing advice, training, childcare and other support. We are giving people the confidence they need to help themselves into jobs."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 180/01 Thursday 19 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NATIONAL TRANSPLANT WEEK

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is supporting the drive to increase the number of organ donors as part of the current National Transplant Week. Last year the MP registered his name with the NHS to become an organ donor.

The MP said: "The widening gap between numbers on the waiting list and organs available for transplant increases all the time. This was the spur for me to put my name forward."

The MP uncovered figures of patients awaiting transplant. 6,220 people are waiting for a renal transplant, 464 are waiting for new lungs or heart and 159 people wanting a new liver.

As the MP said last week the most successful transplants come from organs donated within the recipient's own ethnic group because of the importance of matching tissues in organ donation. The Department of Health launched a South Asian community campaign in 1999 to recruit more donors from the community. The campaign generated a great deal of interest - both in transplantation and in preventing the underlying causes of renal failure. The campaign is still ongoing.

The MP concluded: "It is important to encourage all members of our society to register as organ donors. I am hopeful the national campaign will boost the numbers and many more people will be carrying a donor card."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 181/01 Tuesday 24 July 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

A FLYING START FOR PENDLE SURE START

This week sees the launch of Pendle Sure Start Services and local MP, Gordon Prentice, is delighted to welcome the service to Nelson.

To mark the launch there are a number of events taking place in the Bradley and Whitefield wards of Nelson and the aim is to involve as many parents and children in one of the activites. Once an intiail contact is made Sure Start hope that the parents will make use of the services in the future.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 182/01 Wednesday 15 August 2001

www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE UNEMPLOYMENT DOWN

The number of people out of work in Pendle in July and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,313 - down from 1,373 in June 2001. This represents an unemployment rate of 3.8%. There were 970 men and 343 women out of work.

Nationally, the claimant count has again fallen and now stands at 950,300., the lowest for 25 years. Employment is up by 250,000 on the year and now stands at 28,175,000.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "The drop in the jobless figures has come as somewhat a surprise. The number of lay-offs announced had us all believing the figures would rise and it is true the loss of manufacturing jobs seems to be gathering pace. However, the rise in new jobs in the service sector is taking the sting out of the tail."

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Alistair Darling, said: "Even though unemployment is falling, we recognise that some sectors are experiencing difficulties." He continued: "Our policies and programmes remain focused on helping people who have lost their jobs get back into work again, as well as helping everyone who can work to do so."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 183/01 Wednesday 29 August 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP CALLS FOR ACTION ON HOUSING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has renewed his call for concerted action to tackle the housing plight in Pendle and elsewhere in East Lancashire. The MP has long campaigned for additional resources to tackle disrepair in private sector housing.

The MP has written to the new Housing Minister, Lord Falconer, to see what further help the Government can give to East Lancashire. In October last year the then Housing Minister, Nick Raynsford, visited Nelson before going on to have a look at housing conditions in Burnley. Housing is a key priority in East Lancashire and the Pendle MP has pressed the Prime Minister to address this issue with urgency.

The MP said: "Here in East Lancashire we have some of the oldest housing in Britain and much of it is in dire straits. I have told Ministers that we can't deal with the legacy of neglect on our own. At the present rate of housing renewal we will be into the next millennium before we have tackled this problem."

In the last budget the Government has brought in the brownfield land tax credit which pays people to clean up sites. This positive move aims to encourage private sector investment in new housing on brownfield sites.

The Pendle MP is also still pressing the Government to get on with a revaluation of the Council Tax banding. He said: "In Pendle, the vast majority of properties are either Band A or Band B and the case for a lower starting point is compelling, given the huge number of modestly valued properties in this area."

He concluded: "It's time for action, poor housing can affect people's health and well-being. Putting this right is not something that can be delayed."

Housing is to be the subject of debate at a meeting of Pendle Borough Council this Thursday where the Labour Group are submitting a motion requesting the introduction of a lower band of Council Tax for properties with a value below £25,000.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471
(constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Labour's Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 183/01 Tuesday 4 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR HELP FOR AFRICAN AIDS VICTIMS

The AIDS pandemic in Southern Africa is wiping out a whole generation says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP has recently returned from a visit to Southern Africa

where he witnessed first hand the appalling consequences of HIV-AIDS. The outlook for Botswana and Namibia is very uncertain because of the pandemic. Over one third of all sexually active adults are infected with the virus and the new drugs (the very expensive anti retro virals) which can control the disease, are simply not available.

The MP said: “I visited one shanty town outside Windhoek (capital of Namibia) where the cemetery was full up before the local authority had finished building it. I spoke to women in a co-operative in the town where they were turning old newspaper into papier mache coffins for children - I found it very distressing. The developed world has a huge amount to do to help these countries stricken by AIDS.”

The MP continued: “Drought is also a big worry here and huge tracts of country are desert. You can fly for a couple of hours and see the same unchanging arid earth below. In both cases, the desert amounts to areas the size of France and there’s a real possibility that water, or the absence of it, is likely to become the source of regional instability in the future, as water is diverted from rivers in the north, close to Angola, to supply the fast growing towns in the south.”

He continued: “I travelled with a small group of MPs and had the opportunity to meet all the leading politicians over there - from the President down. The two countries have very different histories. Botswana was a British Protectorate and during the long struggle against Apartheid in South Africa - immediately to the south - the country became one of the so-called front line states, giving shelter to many of those who are now in the new Government in South Africa.”

more follows.....

MP CALLS FOR HELP FOR AFRICAN AIDS VICTIMS

Namibia was originally a German colony until it became independent (from South Africa) in 1990 and many of the Ministers and movers and shakers we met were SWAPO Freedom Fighters living only a decade ago, in the bush. They are still struggling to build a peaceful multi-racial Namibia on the back of its Apartheid past.

Outside the towns in the Kalahari Desert, dwell the San People, better known to us as the Bushmen. A huge controversy is raging as to whether these hunter gatherers, who have no contact with the outside world, should be permanently settled in villages or left alone to their nomadic way of life. The Botswana Government is adamant they should be settled and this has drawn fierce criticism from organisations such as Survival International, who say it is a crime to forcibly change a way of life that has existed since the dawn of time.

The Pendle MP said: “Both countries are havens for wildlife and I saw huge herds of elephants and hippos. The elephant population in Botswana has trebled over the last 15 years and is now approaching 150,000. The Government says it needs to cull the trade in ivory. To compound the problem, elephants - because they are very

intelligent creatures - are moving south into Botswana from Angola where a civil war rages."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471
(constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 185/01 Thursday 13 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

WORLD TRADE CENTRE - NEW YORK

In Pendle earlier today, local MP Gordon Prentice, described his horror at the events which unfolded on TV on Tuesday 11 September.

Speaking from his consitutency office in Nelson before leaving for London and the special recall of Parliament tomorrow (Friday), the MP said: "We all share a feeling of disbelief at what happened in America on Tuesday. It was an unimaginable horror which no one could have expected to witness,

Our hearts go out to the victims and their families. They and we struggle to comprehend the magnitude of this. It is quite right that Parliament should be recalled to hear from the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471
(constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 186/01 19 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BRAVERY AWARDS FOR NELSON POLICE OFFICERS

PHOTOCALL: Thursday 20 September at 4pm at the Lancashire Constabulary Pennine Division HQ, Parker Lane, Burnley

Two brave police officers, PCs Julia Fort and Michael Baker, both based at the Broadway Police Station in Nelson are to receive bravery awards tomorrow from Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice and the Divisional Police Commander, Chief Superintendent Knowles.

The certificates of commendation from the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society are for outstanding bravery in rescuing a man from a blazing house.

Speaking before the ceremony, the MP said: “The rescue took place five minutes before the fire brigade arrived. The chances are the man who was rescued would have perished in the flames if the police had waited for the firefighters.”

“This act of bravery by two Nelson police officers - who disregarded the dreadful risks they faced - should be applauded. Their decision to go in made the difference between life and death.”

“These police officers, quite literally, deserve a medal.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 187/01 19 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LANCASHIRE POLICE UP FOR INSPECTION

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be quizzing Lancashire Chief Constable, Mrs Pauline Clare, and her top aides on Friday in a meeting at the Force HQ at Hutton on Friday (21 September) called to discuss crime and policing issues facing the county.

Speaking before the meeting, the MP said: “Figures just published by the Home Office show that nationwide, the police are doing a good job in difficult circumstances. The police recorded 5.2 million offences in the 12 months to March 2001 - a fall of 2.5% over the previous 12 months. Recorded violent crime rose but at a slower rate than over the previous year.”

“24% of all recorded crimes - including 55% of all violent crimes were detected in the 12 months to March 2001.”

“Here in Pendle I want to make sure the local police are working closely with the council and other local agencies to tackle crime and stamp down on loutish behaviour.”

“Some people do have their criticisms of the police and my meetings with the Chief Constable are useful in giving these an airing and hearing what the police top brass have to say.”

The Lancashire Constabulary is shortly to undergo one of its regular periodic inspections by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 188/01 19 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PPWA ANNUAL FUNCTION

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining other guests at the PPWA's annual function on Friday 21 September at 7.30pm at the Civic Theatre, Stanley Street, Nelson.

Speaking before the event, the MP said: "The PPWA is a long established organisation here in Pendle and I always look forward to hearing first hand about their successes over the years and the new challenges they face."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 189/01 19 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LANCASHIRE EMBRACES THE SILVER SURFERS

Lancashire County Council is considering a suggestion by Pendle MP to get the county's residential homes wired up so that residents can surf the internet.

The MP contacted the county's education chiefs to make the case for the elderly who want to get on the net. The MP has now been told by the Acting County Director of Education, Jack Bennett, that Lancashire is now looking at "expanding older learner opportunities" along the lines suggested by the Pendle MP.

The MP said: "This is great news. We hear so much about getting young people computer literate - and quite right too - but the internet can expand the horizons of the elderly. The knowledge revolution is for everyone, not just younger people."

Mr Bennett told the MP: "We presently have an extensive range of computer learning provision for older learners. This is funded through our Adult and Continuing Education Service in a wide variety of venues including libraries, village halls, community centres and pubs. The Mobile Learning Zone bus, a joint partnership between the BBC and the County Council, is also providing initial learner contacts for older learners who can then be referred on to further learning opportunities where these are required."

Mr Bennett added: "In addition we provide other "Silver Surfer" courses through our adult education colleges and these have proved very popular."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 190/01 19 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CHECKS OUT BAE SYSTEMS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be visiting BAE Systems complex in Warton this Friday morning (21 September) to get a progress report on how the company is tackling the big challenges facing the aerospace industry. The Pendle MP takes a close interest in aerospace issues as the industry is a big employer in his Pendle constituency.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson today, the MP said: “BAE Systems is a huge employer in the North West. Millions have been spent on the Eurofighter assembly facilities at Warton and Samlesbury and I am very keen indeed to hear more about the investment programme. A lot of what they are doing over there is leading edge stuff. Astonishingly, 70% of the Eurofighter’s surface is made of carbon fibre composite.”

The MP added: “The tragic events in America last week will undoubtedly hit the airline industry and aerospace too. People will still want to travel but they will want to be reassured the security on the ground and in the air is really belt and braces.”

The number of passengers flown domestically and internationally by UK airlines rose from 43 million in 1994 to 70 million last year.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 191/01 Wednesday 26 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SHOCKED BY HEALTH INEQUALITY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a new drive to reduce health inequalities. The figures for child mortality rates and life expectancy across the country reveal startling differences depending on where you live.

The MP said: "I was shocked to find that the life expectancy here in Pendle for men is just over 74 and for women is 77 compared to Mid Devon, for example, where men can expect to live to 78 and women 83. That's a six year difference for women."

He continued: "Research continues to show that the poor die younger than the rich and babies born to poor parents have less chance of survival than their wealthier counterparts. In this day and age it is unacceptable that where you live can affect how long you live for."

He said: "Here in Pendle we have seen measures introduced which, overtime, will make a difference. We have the new Sure Start scheme in Nelson with a bid for a further scheme for Colne. This targets very young children - up to 4 - and helps them get a good start in life."

The MP said: "I am meeting with the chief officers of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Community Health Council this Friday (28 September) and will be raising this whole issue with them."

At the same meeting the MP will be discussing how patients can best be given a voice in the NHS. A few months ago controversy raged over Government proposals to get rid of the CHCs and replace them with patients forums. The MP expressed his concerns at the time and will be exchanging views over the Governments new discussion document 'Involving Patients and the Public in Healthcare'.
Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 192/01 19 September 2001

MP TO MEET BLAIR TO DISCUSS TERRORIST THREAT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet the Prime Minister on Monday (24 September) to discuss the response to the attacks last week on the World Trade Centre in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington.

Speaking this week in Nelson, the MP said: “The atrocities committed last week in which thousands of innocent people lost their lives were appalling acts of brutality carried out by crazed fanatics. They have been condemned by Muslims here in the UK and abroad. No-one should blame Islam for the outrage in America. Islam specifically states there can be no excuse for taking innocent lives.”

“The clear priority is to find the individuals linked to this crime.
The kind of people who are prepared to fly aeroplanes into skyscrapers are also quite capable of other outrages such as crashing a plane into a nuclear power station or even poisoning a city’s water supply. These things no longer appear far fetched. These threats are real and we’ve got to address them. What is absolutely essential though is that we cannot and must not shoot from the hip and expose the innocent to danger.”

The MP added: “In a weak of unremitting gloom and bad news, I welcome the statement by President Arafat and moves by the Israeli government to institute a cease-fire. I want to see peace talks resumed without preconditions.”

The MP was elected in July to the Parliamentary Committee of the Labour Party and meets the PM on a weekly basis.

Note to Editors: In a unanimous decision, the UN Security Council

more follows

resolved that those directly responsible for what happened, together with those "aiding, supporting, or harbouring the perpetrators, organisers or sponsors of these acts", should be held accountable. The Council expressed its readiness to take "all necessary steps" to respond to the terrorist acts and to combat all forms of terrorism. This move was also supported unanimously by the UN's General Assembly.

UK nationals in Pakistan: The FCO have issued advice that travel to Pakistan should, until further notice, be avoided.

British nationals in Pakistan will wish to consider whether it is necessary to stay and those still in the North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan and the Northern Areas are strongly advised to leave.

Those who choose to stay are being advised to exercise caution and ensure they are registered with our Consular authorities.

Dependants of UK based staff at British posts in Pakistan and non-essential personnel will be leaving.

UK threat: The security services monitor a number of people and remain vigilant at all times to the threat of both domestic and international terrorism.

This was the largest loss of life of British citizens since the War. Significant numbers of Britons have been killed; our interests are therefore engaged in a very real sense.

To give some idea of the scale of loss:
at Lockerbie 270 people were killed, 44 of them British.
In Omagh, 29 people lost their lives.
In the Falklands War 255 British Service men perished.
During the Gulf War we lost 47.

Terrorists in the UK: The Government is absolutely determined that this country should not be used as a base for supporting terrorism in any way and has in place some of the most stringent anti-terrorism legislation in the world.

We have extended the proscription regime to international terrorist organisations - another tangible demonstration that we are serious in our fight against international terrorism. The intention is to make life more difficult for international terrorist organisations to operate from here and to seek to deter them from coming here at all.

However, it is clear that further changes may need to be put in place and David Blunkett is at a meeting in Brussels on Thursday at which harmonising extradition across the EU will be discussed.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 193/01 Wednesday 26 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SUPPORTS NEW MENTAL HEALTH TRUST

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is supporting the establishment of a new Mental Health Trust in Lancashire. The MP told health chiefs he hopes a new trust will bring about a new focus on the quality and range of mental health services available and their accessibility. There has been a full consultation on the proposal and the responses are to be considered very shortly.

The MP said: “There has been a real problem in East Lancashire getting suitably qualified staff within mental health and a new Trust will, I hope, be able to address this problem.”

He continued: “I am also keen to see the provision of more specialist services. For example in the past the very small number of young people suffering from dementia have had no specific help and were grouped in with elderly dementia sufferers.”

The MP concluded: “At the moment seven different NHS Trusts provide mental health services within Lancashire. A larger NHS Trust which focused only on mental health would be able to provide a wider range of specialist services which has to be a good thing.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 194/01 Wed 26 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

POLICE STRUGGLE TO COPE WITH THOUSANDS OF 999 CALLS DIALLED BY MISTAKE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is contacting Trade and Industry Minister, Patricia Hewitt, to call for a re-design of mobile phones to prevent “inadvertent” 999 calls being made.

In Lancashire, more emergency calls are made from mobiles than from land lines.

Speaking from his constituency office today, the MP said: “These false alarms are a huge problem. They clog up the system, and delay genuine calls getting through. It is too easy to dial a number by mistake by, for example, sitting on a phone.”

“There is also a problem with multiple calls reporting the same thing. The police told me last week they had received 93 calls about a swan waddling across the M6!”

The MP added: “The police are getting on top of the problem but a phone re-design is still a top priority. The police here in Lancashire are planning to recruit by January 2002 an extra 31 communications people to handle calls.”

An investigation of 74,500 inadvertent mobile phone calls made to the Metropolitan Police in London showed that only one was a genuine emergency - and that was for the ambulance service.

There are 40 million mobile phones in the UK.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 195/01 Wed 26 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL HOSPITALS RATE TWO OUT OF THREE STARS

Burnley Health Care NHS Trust and Airedale NHS Trust - the hospitals serving Pendle - have been rated two out of three stars in the Government's new performance ratings for the NHS.

According to Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, two stars are given to Trusts that are *"performing well overall"* but have not reached the same consistently high standards as those with three stars. The new ratings measure 21 performance indicators including, for example, waiting times, hospital cleanliness, and operations cancelled on the day.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: "It is good news that our local hospitals are doing well. If these stars inject greater efficiency into hospital administration across the UK there will be a round of applause. No patient wants to be treated in a dirty hospital. But, in my view, they have to be treated with caution. They don't tell us where patients will receive the best clinical care - although, to be fair, they are not designed to do this."

The Minister told the MP: "The performance ratings do not mean that a poorly performing Trust is unsafe, does not contain some very good clinical services, or that the staff are not working hard in often difficult circumstances. However, as you are aware there is too much variation in performance within the NHS. I am sure you share my determination to ensure that every hospital is a good hospital."

Note to Editors: The Health Secretary wrote to the MP as follows: "The Government is committed to making information on the performance of the NHS accessible to the public. The NHS Plan commits the Department of Health to assigning ratings to organisations based on their performance against a number of indicators.... The NHS Performance Ratings system

more follows

LOCAL HOSPITALS RATE TWO OUT OF THREE STARS

assesses hospital performance during 2000/1 against a number of targets and places them into one of four categories:

• Trusts with the *highest levels of performance* are awarded a perform-ance rating of three stars;
• Trusts that are *performing well overall,* but have not quite reached the same consistently high standards, are awarded a performance rating of two stars;
• Trusts where there is some *cause for concern* regarding particular key targets are awarded one star;
• Trusts that have shown the *poorest levels of performance* against key targets are awarded a rating of zero stars.

This is the first time we have assessed performance on the basis of the things that patients care about such as waiting times and hospital cleanliness. It is important that action is taken on the basis of this assessment - both to reward good performance and tackle poor performance. The Government is backing the NHS Performance Ratings system with extra money to invest in improved performance. Each part of the health service is guaranteed a fair share of the new NHS Performance Fund: in its first year of operation £155m is being allocated to Trusts... Three star Trusts will immediately be able to benefit from a wider range of autonomy measures, including:

• Less frequent monitoring from the centre;
• Fewer and better co-ordinated inspections;
• Develop their own investment programmes without receiving prior approval;
• Retain more of the proceeds of local land sales for re-investment in local services;
• Become pilot sites for new initiatives such as team bonuses for staff,
• Receive extra cash for central programmes without having to bid for it;
• Support to create new companies to extend their research strengths, or sell services to other organisations. There will be no question of selling services to NHS patients, and trading profits will be re-invested in patient care.
• Receive extra resources if they are required to take over and improve the performance of persistently failing trusts.

Trusts with a performance rating of one star will be required to produce a performance improvement plan, agreed with the Modernisation Agency, before they are able to spend their share of the Performance Fund. This plan will set out the specific action they need to take to address their areas for improvement which will be reviewed on a regular basis. The Modernisation Agency will provide focused external support, advice and assistance to enable Trusts' performance to improve. If one star Trusts do not improve, having received this extra assistance, they may be subject to more direct forms of intervention....

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 196/01 Wed 26 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SAYS TERRORISTS MUST BE BROUGHT TO BOOK

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will tell a meeting of his constituency party on Friday evening (28 September) that the terrorists responsible for planning the attacks on New York and Washington must be tracked down and brought to justice.

But he will say there must be evidence - an audit trail - linking the chief suspect Osama Bin Laden and, by extension, Afghanistan's rulers, the Taliban, to the outrage. And, crucially, the MP says the lives of the innocent must be protected.

The MP was called to 10 Downing Street on Monday for a discussion with the Prime Minister on events since the attack and for a briefing on the latest situation. The MP pressed for a recall of Parliament. This has now been agreed and will take place next Thursday - a week tomorrow.

Speaking from Nelson today, the MP said: "The Prime Minister recognised the importance of having evidence before we proceed. If it is not there, an attack on Afghanistan will be wholly counter-productive. There will be major implications for Pakistan too. The country has already taken in over two million Afghan refugees."

The MP added: "The Taliban regime is completely odious. Girls and women are denied education and are not allowed to work. Minorities are forced to wear badges. There are public executions and mutilations. Women who, for example, inadvertently expose their ankles in public are beaten up. Magazines are not allowed and neither is television. The Taliban leaders ordered the destruction of priceless historic artefacts. It is a woeful record."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 197/01 Friday 28 September 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS HEALTH WATCHDOG

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is challenging the Government to spell out "in plain language" the benefits of the proposed new structure for involving patients and the public in the NHS.

At present, Community Health Councils (CHCs) are the one-stop shop which take up complaints and speak out on behalf of patients. Under the Government's plans, they are to be abolished. At a meeting in Burnley this morning with chairman Frank

Clifford and other members of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CHC, the MP heard concerns that the alternative structure was too fragmented.

The CHC's Helen Gee told the MP: "The new system will be very difficult for patients and the public to understand. There will be five patient tiers and we remain to be convinced that this will lead to a properly co-ordinated way in which patients can achieve real influence and change at all levels in the NHS."

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "I am concerned about all the organisational change and upheaval in the NHS just when we all want to concentrate on delivery. Organisational change can be a great distraction. The benefits have got to be clear and unambiguous."

Consultation on the document "Involving Patients and the Public in healthcare" runs until 12 October. It is available on the internet at www.doh.gov.uk/involvingpatients. The Government is also consulting on "Reforming the NHS Complaints Procedure". It is available on www.doh.gov.uk/nhscompliaintsreform.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 198/01 Monday 22 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO MEET ROLLS ROYCE CHIEFS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, and other members of the company's board early next month to discuss the crisis facing aviation and aerospace and the company's plans for the future.

Last week the company announced big job losses across the UK - attributing the decision to the fallout from the atrocity in America on 11 September. As yet, the company has not given a breakdown - site by site - of where the jobs will go.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Clearly, this is a very worrying time for RR workers. We all want to see the company's detailed plans so we know what we are talking about."

The MP added: "Business traffic is significantly down on the trans-Atlantic routes. We all hope it picks up again rapidly on the back of the tightened security that is now in place."

In Barnoldswick, in the MP's Pendle constituency, the company makes the fans for aero engines. These are bought by the commercial airlines - some of whose businesses are in free fall.

The two sites in Barnoldswick employ about 1,200 people.

RR is Pendle's biggest employer.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 199/01 Monday 22 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP LAMENTS BSE "BRAINS MIX-UP"

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today lashed out at scientists who had mixed up sheep and cattle brains in an experiment designed to find out if sheep in the early 1990s were carrying BSE. The sheep equivalent of BSE - scrapie - has been in the national flock for hundreds of years without ill effects to humans.

In the Commons this afternoon, in questions to the Environment and Agriculture Minister, Margaret Beckett, the MP wondered aloud how professional scientists could have mixed up cattle brains with those of sheep - rendering the results of the experiments invalid. He told the Minister the key question was whether poor record keeping and sloppy laboratory procedures had compromised the results of other experiments.

MPs were told an investigation was in hand to establish the facts.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "This sort of thing undermines confidence in the Department of Rural Affairs so it is important we find out precisely what happened."

Margaret Beckett has written to the Liberal Democrat Agriculture spokesperson, Malcolm Bruce. The letter is set out below.

Note to Editors: I thought I should send you a note to set the record straight about the handling of information about the Institute for Animal Health's (IAH) research into BSE and sheep, especially in the light of media comment on this issue.

The research in question was commissioned by my Department, and conducted by the IAH. My Department also commissioned separate DNA testing work at the Laboratory of the Government Chemist (LGC), to guard against the possibility of the material used in the experiment having been contaminated by cattle brains, not least because it had originally been

more follows

collected for entirely different research. The results of the DNA testing work were presented to DEFRA on Wednesday 17 October.

I first became aware of the information in question on the afternoon of the Wednesday. While I was as surprised as everyone else at what we now believe to have happened, my immediate reaction was that we should check to see whether there was a relatively simple explanation. What I had in mind was that the sample cross-checked for contamination might itself have been the wrong sample. This outcome would obviously be irritating and time-consuming, but would have left whatever emerged from the experiment unaltered. In any event I commissioned an urgent and independent scientific audit to get to the bottom of what had happened in this case. Only when the results of this audit are available, will it be right to address other issues which have been raised in the press (e.g. about the public expenditure involved).

However, within two or three hours we learned that the simple explanation was thought probably not to be the case, and that the research itself had probably been based on material from the same pool as that which was cross-checked. Following discussions with Peter Smith (Chairman of SEAC), John Krebs of the FSA and others, I took the decision that this news should be made public as quickly as possible, especially as the fact that SEAC was due to meet was quite widely known, and the Chairman had decided (since that was the only agenda item) that the meeting need not now take place. I therefore gave instructions that a Press Release should be drawn up which explained that the SEAC meeting had been cancelled, where matters now stood, and the action we had in hand. As a matter of courtesy, I asked that the News Release be checked with those most closely involved, but that thereafter it should issue as soon as possible.

It was of course open to me to delay making any statements until the following day, but I believed that openness demanded we go on the record as soon as possible, especially as the process of cancelling Seac's meeting was bound to raise questions. No doubt, had we waited until the following morning to put out a Press Release at what might be considered a more usual hour, we would have been accused of trying to conceal the information for as long as possible!

Inevitably, there has been much over simplistic reporting of the purpose and potential outcome of this and other experiments designed to give us information on BSE and sheep. This is a complex area where uncertainty abounds. Indeed, even if this experiment had not been called into question in the way it has, its results would not have given us any clear cut answers, although they might have helped to reduce some of the uncertainties. If you and your team would find it valuable for my officials to brief you about the implications of the work being undertaken, I would be very happy to arrange this.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 200/01 Wednesday 10 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

‘JINI’ IS OUT OF THE BOTTLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is officially opening a new high tech company in Nelson this Friday, 12 October, at 12.00 noon. The ceremony takes place at the company’s headquarters at Riverside Mill, Crawford Street, Nelson.

The MP said: “It is always great to see new jobs come into Pendle. Jini already employs 60 people and I know they are looking for at least another 50 over the coming months.”

The MP was also pleased to see Riverside Mill, the former John Wilman factory, being used again.

He said: “The mill has been transformed into a modern Call Centre, these centres are springing up all over the country and it is certainly an industry of the 21st century.”

The MP said: “I’m looking forward to my visit on Friday and chatting to the workers and finding out a bit more about what the job actually entails. We all want to see interesting and challenging jobs that pay well and which offer opportunities for local people.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 201/01 Wednesday 10 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP IN TALKS WITH COUNTY COUNCIL CHIEFS OVER LATEST THREAT TO AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

The fall out of the American and British attacks on the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan could have major repercussions for the aerospace industry in the North West according to Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP was voicing his concerns in advance of a meeting in Preston tomorrow (11 October) in Preston with the new leader of Lancashire County Council, Hazel Harding, and the Deputy Leader, Doreen Pollitt.

The MP said: "Airlines and grounding aircraft and laying off staff because fewer people are flying after the tragedy of 11 September. Confidence has been dented but the security procedures at our airports and in the air have never been tighter. But clearly, if airlines are cancelling orders for new planes this will have implications for Rolls Royce, the aero-engine manufacturers who are so important to us in East Lancashire."

The MP added: "The County Council takes a close and active interest in the aerospace industry and in manufacturing generally. These are difficult times and I want to know how we can best work together to safeguard jobs in the sector."

The MP will also raise a variety of other issues such as school admissions policies and help for the voluntary sector.

"The County Council is undertaking a major review of how it delivers its services to local people. I think the new leadership wants the County Council to be lighter on its feet and quicker to respond to things. That's good."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 202/01 Wednesday 10 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP at Higherford Mill, Barrowford on Friday 12 October at 1.15pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice is attending the opening of a new exhibition commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West. The exhibition entitled 'Ford' is a series of community art by Welfare State International and the event marks the first phase of the project to restore the mill as a cultural and educational centre.

The MP said: "At one time it was feared the mill was to be demolished so it's great to see it take on a new lease of life."

The project has had a total of £32,769 in funds from a range of bodies including the Regional Arts Lottery Programme, Lancashire County Council, the Borough of Pendle and the North West Tourism Partnership.

The 'Ford' exhibition includes a virtual waterwheel, a ghost loom and a paradise tree of bird and animal lanterns.

The MP said: "I am very much looking forward to seeing and hearing this exhibition! I am told it will be 'calming and invigorating', just what I need."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 202/01 8 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

RAILTRACK HITS THE BUFFERS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has backed the Government's decision to refuse any further public funding for the beleaguered company, Railtrack, to help it stave off insolvency. Railtrack will now be wound up and replaced, in due course, by a new public interest company with no shareholders where all profits are reinvested in the railway.

Speaking from Nelson earlier today, the MP, who has a long standing interest in transport issues, said: "Railtrack was always an accident waiting to happen. Since privatisation, it has limped along for years, staggering from one crisis to the next. I see this as a fresh start for the railway."

The Transport Secretary, Stephen Byers, said: "The Government cannot justify any more additional public money for Railtrack. We provided a substantial package of financial assistance in April, but the company came to us in July asking for additional public subsidy. They subsequently also requested a suspension of the regulatory regime.

He added: "The Government will always stand behind the rail system and is prepared to spend over £30bn over the next ten years to ensure a substantially improved rail network, but is not prepared to fund the poor performance of individual companies.

"I believe the public interest would be better served if the interests of the rail network operator were aligned with the interests of the whole industry. This can be achieved if the future management were freed from the requirement to deliver returns on publicly traded shares."

more follows

NO TEARS FOR RAILTRACK says MP

"This proposal would create a business independent of Government operating on a fully commercial basis. But it would be a private sector company working in the interests of the whole industry."

Note to Editors: In July 2001, following John Robinson's appointment, the Board of Railtrack Group concluded that it had insufficient revenue to allow it to finance its activities over the medium term. They approached Government seeking further yet more financial support and a suspension of the economic regulatory regime. This request included an open-ended financial commitment on government for the next three to five years. Stephen Byers has rejected this request.

Ernst & Young have been appointed Special Railway Administrators on the making of a Railways Administration Order in the High Court under the provisions of the Railways Act 1993. The Railway Administrators are under a legal duty to manage the company so as to keep the rail network operational throughout Railway Administration and to seek to agree the terms on which the licensed activities currently undertaken by Railtrack would be transferred out of Administration as a going concern.

The Government will provide the Railway Administrators with sufficient funds to allow them to continue to pay trade creditors as invoices fall due for payment. Suppliers who are creditors of the company and whose invoices are approved for payment by the company in the normal way will continue to be paid.

The financial consequences of today's actions for shareholders in Railtrack Group will depend on the terms of any scheme proposed by the Administrators Railway Administrators as appropriate for the transfer of Railtrack plc out of administration as a going concern. But no public monies will be available to support shareholder value.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 203/01 Wednesday 10 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

Photocall: Gordon Prentice MP at the junction of Barkerhouse Road and Parrock Street, Nelson on Friday 12 October at 2.30pm

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is officially opening a new housing development in Nelson this Friday. The development has been a partnership between St Vincent's and Ashiana Housing Association and the builder, Lovell Partnership.

St Philips School have based a 12 month project on the house building, regularly taking photographs and drawings and learning the history of the area. The pupils will present the MP with the 'Big Book', a culmination of their work.

The MP said: "East Lancashire has some of the worst housing in the country. This new estate is just the sort of property needed in Pendle and I congratulate St Vincent's for pulling the whole scheme together."

With local authority support the team who managed the Barkerhouse Road scheme are hoping to provide similar accommodation on part of the site currently occupied by the Grove Hotel. St Vincent's continue their work elsewhere in the Borough which includes the Pendle Young Builders project and the Care & Repair initiative.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 204/01 Wednesday 17 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

HOUSING MINISTER TO VISIT PENDLE

Housing Minister, Lord Falconer, is to visit Pendle this Friday (19 October). The Minister has taken up an invitation made in August by the area's MP, Gordon Prentice, to visit the constituency and see for himself the state of the private sector housing stock.

Earlier in the day, the Minister will spend some time in Hyndburn and in Rossendale and Darwen.

In October last year the then Housing Minister, Nick Raynsford, visited Nelson before going on to have a look at housing conditions in Burnley. Housing is a key priority in East Lancashire and the Pendle MP has pressed the Prime Minister to address the issue.

Speaking before the Ministerial visit, the Pendle MP said: "Everyone knows the scale of the problem. The Government just needs to roll up its sleeves and get stuck in. The scale of the problem is daunting but that must not deter us."

The MP continued: "Over one in five houses in East Lancashire is unfit and 99% of these are in the private sector. In Pendle there are 5,400 unfit properties. A staggering 6% of Pendle's private sector properties are empty. In some parts of Pendle the housing market has collapsed completely. A start has been made but we need a lot of effort and a lot of money to turn things around."

In the last budget the Government introduced the brownfield land tax credit which pays people to clean up derelict sites. This positive move aims to encourage private sector investment in new housing on brownfield sites.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 206/01 Thursday 18 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP URGES "NO PANIC CUTS" IN ROLLS ROYCE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged the aero-engine manufacturers, Rolls Royce, not to make "panic cuts" in its workforce in response to the atrocity in America on September 11. The company has a plant in Barnoldswick in the MP's Pendle constituency which makes fan blades for aero engines..

Speaking in advance of this afternoon's expected announcement by the company, the MP told the Commons that the "calamitous consequences" of 11 September were rippling out beyond the airline industry to aerospace manufacturers.

He urged the Leader of the House, Robin Cook, to press the Trade and Industry Secretary to make an urgent statement to the Commons tomorrow. Cook told the MP it was vitally important to retain highly skilled jobs.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "There are estimates that 200,000 airline jobs world-wide could disappear this year as a result of the atrocity in America. Here in Britain, British Airways is cutting 7,000 jobs and Virgin Atlantic is losing 1,300. Airlines that are household names are on the verge of collapse. Things are very difficult now but there will be a recovery."

"In the short term, the Government must bear the additional costs of airport and airline security. And the Government must look again at the burden insurance costs and indemnities are placing on the aviation industry."

The MP added: "We need to get people flying again."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 07753 662 814

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 207/01 Monday 22 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

OLDER PEOPLE 'THE NEGLECTED RESOURCE" says MP

One in three people between the age of 50 and retirement age is not working according to local MP, Gordon Prentice. He says this is a scandalous waste of talent the country can ill afford.

Speaking at Westminster, the MP said: "Getting people into work is a top priority for the Government. But we need to do more to help people enter employment who desperately want a job.

"Unemployment has now fallen below 1 million for the first time since 1975 but there are still too many people who want to work but cannot get into the workforce."

"Astonishingly, one in three people between age 50 and state retirement age is not working, though this is rarely by choice. The qualities of older people in the workplace too often go unrecognised. Their experience and skills are an invaluable resource we cannot afford to lose. I want to see us build on the New Deal for 50+ to give more people the opportunity to continue in full and part time work up to retirement age."

"Surveys show that 1 million more disabled people would like paid work and 400,000 believe they could work, given the right support. I want to see the new Disability Rights Commission ensure that disabled people get a fair deal in the workplace."

"WE also need to make work pay. The National Minimum Wage is raising pay rates for the lowest paid jobs. The Working Families Tax Credit is making work more worthwhile for families with children. The Disabled Person's Tax Credit is doing the same for disabled people.

more follows

The MP added: "Of course, not everybody is in a position to do paid work. People who cannot work should have security and a decent quality of life."

The Government has taken a number of steps to give people more help.

• introduced the Disability Income Guarantee in April this year for severely disabled adults - worth £142 for a single person and £186.80 for a couple.

• extended the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance to severely disabled 3- and 4-year-olds ñ worth over £38 a week.

• increased the Disabled Child Premium in the income-related benefits to £30 a week from April ñ over £7 a week more than the normal uprating.

• ensured carers will benefit from a package of extra help worth £500m over 3 years.

• And from April next year, young people disabled early in life, who have not had the opportunity to work will get up to £27 a week extra from IB.

"I believe it is right to give people help and support into work. I want to see us build on the success of the New Deal."

"I have always believed a job is the best kind of social security. But, equally, I believe there must be security and dignity for those who cannot work. That's the message."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 209/01 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

DATE DATE DATE DATE DATE

FOREIGN SECRETARYíS SPEECH TO INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES, 22 OCTOBER 2001:
ìORDER OUT OF CHAOS: THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTANî

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are still too close to the events of 11 September to begin to form a proper historical view of them. But already it is clear that the terrorist atrocities in the United States marked a transition in world affairs.

Few events in global history can have galvanised the international system to action so completely in so short a time.

The fall of the Berlin Wall may have been one such event. And if the main challenge before the collapse of the Soviet empire and throughout the 20th century consisted of states with too much power, the problem of the 21st century may be states with too little power.

After the murder of thousands of people in the heart of Manhattan, no one can doubt that the primary threat to our security is now posed by groups acting formally outside states, or from places where no state functions.

It used to be possible to ignore distant and misgoverned parts of the world. That is no longer so. In the world without borders, chaos is now our neighbour whether it is in Africa, in Asia or in Afghanistan.

This morning I want to suggest four principles which should guide the international communityís approach to rebuilding Afghanistan as soon as the immediate crisis is at an end:

First, that the future should, above all, be placed in the hands of the people of Afghanistan themselves;

Second, that we need a global coalition to help rebuild Afghanistan;

Third, that the United Nations should take the lead in the political process;

And fourth, that we have to devote the resources and the political will needed to finish the job.

Terrorists are strongest where states are weakest. Usama Bin Laden and the Al-Qaíida network find safe havens in places ñ not just Afghanistan ñ where conflict, poverty, ethnic and racial tensions, exploitation, corruption, poor governance, malign interference from outside or just plain neglect have brought about the collapse of responsible government and civil society.

But the global order, as conceived in the wake of the Second World War, was not designed to deal with failed states. The United Nations is made up of states. International law has traditionally focussed on relations between states.

Now for many parts of the world ñ certainly for most of Europe, but also other regions ñ this system has worked remarkably well. Many of us have enjoyed the longest period of sustained peace in our history over the last half-century.

Sir Michael Howard, the distinguished military historian, provides in his essay The Invention of Peace a convincing account of the rise of the nation state as the key building block of the global order.

As Sir Michael points out, ìThe state not only makes war possible: it also makes peace possibleî. In the first half of the 20th century, aggression by states was the chief cause of wars. In the second half, we have built up a framework for managing state sovereignty in Europe, through NATO and through the EU, which has made this sort of aggression relatively rare.

Sometimes, states do still go to war with states. But in the 1990s, out of roughly 120 wars, only 10 were purely interstate wars. More often nowadays, conflicts arise where no functioning state exists.

If there is one common denominator which links Cambodia in the 70s to Mozambique and Angola in the 80s to Yugoslavia, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone in the 90s to Afghanistan today, it is this: that when we allow governments to fail, warlords, criminals, drugs barons or terrorists will fill the vacuum.

There was nothing inevitable about the failure of these states. I would not want to imply that Nicolo Machiavelli was part of our contemporary pantheon. But he was right when he said, ìThe chief foundations of all statesÖ are good laws and good armiesî. Provided both are present, a state may flourish. It is true that, as a form of government, the nation state developed historically in Europe and a few other regions only. But there are now functioning, indeed thriving, nation states in regions and countries where this is not the historical form of polity.

According to Max Weber, the state is ìa human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territoryî. When states fail, it is often because the monopoly on force is disputed, and because legitimacy has broken down.

Civil wars are rarely ñ if ever ñ just internal affairs. The Cold War superpowers and their proxies, and the imperial powers before them, were often more concerned with securing power than legitimacy over the territories they disputed.

But whatever the historical reasons, where the basis of the state, its laws or its armies, are fatally weakened, chaos is the result.

In the contemporary world, there is one addition to make to Machiavelliís prescription. No state can succeed without active support from and co-operation with other states. And indeed the global system of states cannot function properly where parts of the system have broken down.

Failed states make life miserable ñ or much worse ñ for those unfortunate enough to live there. But in a globalised world, this misery is exported to every corner of the world. 90% of the heroin on British streets originates in Afghanistan.

Chaos not only brings drugs to our streets, but also human trafficking to our ports and borders. And on 11 September it brought mass murder to the very heart and symbol of the success of the Western world.

The challenge posed by failed states is not new. For years we have been devising strategies for dealing with them, with some success. So it is important to underline my belief that what I propose today can be done, by reminding ourselves of what has been done in the recent past.

Criticisms can be made of what has been achieved in Sierra Leone, Bosnia, East Timor, Cambodia and Mozambique. But what is undeniable is that the international community has given those countries a chance to turn their back on conflict.

The people of Sierra Leone are rebuilding their shattered economy and society.

No one has been killed in conflict in Bosnia since 1995.

East Timor will shortly become independent.

Cambodia has a civil society where previously it had the Khmer Rouge.

Against the odds, Mozambique is taking its place as a respected and progressive nation.

We have created mandates for peacekeeping, strategies for development assistance and responses to avert humanitarian catastrophes, and when we can, we act.

We have always had a moral responsibility to deal with human catastrophes. Now we know that it is also a profound national interest not to let them happen.

An active and engaged global foreign policy is not just a salve to liberal consciences. It is a survival mechanism for our societies.

In his speech last month to the Labour Party Conference, our Prime Minister, Tony Blair, outlined a vision of what we might achieve now that we have all been shocked out of our complacency. He said: ìThis is a moment to seize. The kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us re-order this world around usî.

It is in this context that we have to view the activities of the international coalitions against terrorism ñ military, humanitarian and political. Efforts on each of these fronts reinforces efforts on each of the others ñ just as, in post-war Europe, the United Statesí strategy included humanitarian aid, economic reconstruction and, above all, security through NATO.

The current military action in Afghanistan is not in itself the long-term answer to the threat of terrorism. But it is an essential first step.

Usama Bin Laden and Al-Qaíida pose a clear and present danger to our way of life, and we have to defend ourselves against it. I wish there were another way.

But there is not: we face a stark choice, between appeasing these terrorists and confronting them.

It should be obvious to all that there can be no appeasing of people whose values are so alien that they regard the taking of innocent life on a massive scale not as an unfortunate side-effect, but as one objective of their actions.

Long before the terrorists hijacked the airliners which flew into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, they hijacked Afghanistan. And the people of Afghanistan have been the biggest victims of the nexus formed by Al-Qaíida and the Taliban regime ñ in the denial of their human rights, the complete absence of any strategy for economic development, and the obstruction of humanitarian aid.

We have made clear that the humanitarian coalition is just as important as the military one. And like other donors, Britain is pouring resources into the humanitarian effort. But the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan did not begin on 11 September. Millions were displaced from their homes long before that by years of war, by misgovernment and by oppression.

For years the international community has been trying to deal with the vast scale of the crisis. Some parts of the Taliban regime have obstructed this. For example, they are trying now to tax food convoys which get into the country.

The Taliban regimeís policies have led to the starvation of the Afghan people; we are trying to feed them. They have been destroying Afghanistan; we want to rebuild it.

There are those who say that we should halt the bombing to allow more food convoys in. I understand the concerns that lie behind these calls. But a pause in the bombing would only prolong the suffering of the Afghan people. The only things that can help the Afghan people are an end to the civil war, an end to this kind of regime and the start of reconstruction.

If we are to feed and shelter them, and later to help them to build a nation for themselves, we first have to get rid of the main obstacle to their self-fulfilment.

Removing the Taliban regime is not an aim of the military action. But, to quote from the campaign objectives, ìAssuming that Mullah Omar will not comply with the US ultimatum, we require sufficient change in the leadership to ensure that Afghanistanís links with international terrorism are brokenî.

Our message to the people of Afghanistan is this: ìIn the past, we have let you down. But we will not turn our backs on you again. We will work with you, to build a better future for you and your childrenî.

We believe we share an objective with the Afghan people: a stable, durable, representative government, committed to eradicating terrorism, enjoying mature relations with its neighbours, and with which we can work on the humanitarian crisis, drugs, human rights and longer-term development.

Achieving peace and dealing with terrorism are two sides of the same coin. Only if we can help the Afghan people create something like a normal nation again will we be able to safeguard the security of our own nation.

We cannot achieve this overnight. Once there was a reasonably successful state in Afghanistan ñ for forty years prior to 1973. But the country has not known peace since then. For the last five years it has not even existed as a functioning state. It has few serviceable institutions left. We know we are in for a long-term, expensive commitment.

And equally, we know that we might need to move very quickly. The military campaign is likely to go on for some time, as we have made clear from the very beginning.

We have to be prepared to accept that fact. We must not let impatience become our enemy. The 24 hour news media industry is a fact of life, a fundamental climate change in the environment in which we have to operate, and it has brought many obvious benefits for our citizens. But satisfying the demands of the 24 hour news media for instant results cannot become a war aim.

When the end of the current regime comes, it could come gradually, area by area, or very suddenly.

We therefore have to have a robust plan, and we are working with the United Nations, international partners in the coalition, and with representatives of the Afghan people, to formulate it. Today I want to suggest four principles on which I believe all partners can agree.

My first principle is that the future must be placed in the hands of the Afghan people. If we have learned anything from the last 150 years of Afghan history, it is surely that solutions imposed on the country from outside will not work.

Yes, the international community should provide every possible assistance to help the Afghan people create the conditions for an indigenous government.

Yes, any government there must respect the internationally agreed norms of behaviour towards other states and towards its own citizens which every other state is expected to observe.

And yes, the future Afghan government must be broad-based and representative of the great diversity of the countryís ethnic groupings. The domination of Mullah Omar and his faction cannot simply be replaced by another narrow faction, because no regime will be sustainable unless it commands broad consent among those whom it governs, and moves from being a regime to become a government.

But the form of that government, and the process which leads to its establishment, should, within this essential framework, be up to the Afghan people themselves. The international community has to engage with the widest possible range of community leaders within Afghanistan. We have to facilitate, to create the environment for a political reconstruction, but it is the Afghans themselves who must decide.

Despite the fractiousness of the last three decades, the sense of being Afghan remains remarkably strong, as those who know the country so strikingly testify. It is for the Afghan people to decide whether a Loya Jirga, the traditional form of constituent assembly, is the best way forward, or rather some other localised form of decision-making. And it is for them to decide whether the King, who has said he is willing to return, is the best person to act as a figurehead.

My second principle is that we need an international coalition for Afghanistanís future.

The main condition for Afghanistanís stability is that any new government should have not only the assent of its own people but the support of its neighbours and the global community, and an understanding that they are not going to compete with each other in Afghanistan.

Competition among the powers has always been Afghanistanís curse. Britain has no right to point the finger of blame for this at anyone. In the 19th century, we intrigued and fought over influence in Afghanistan, and called it the ìGreat Gameî. The intervention of different powers in Afghanistan, including Russia and the West during the Cold War, did no good to either side and was a tragedy for the Afghan people. Sometimes Afghan leaders have intrigued with outsiders. The victims of this game were always the Afghan people.

What they need now is a consensus among their neighbours and the world about the way forward. Britain has helped to build this consensus. In July, at the UNís request, we hosted a conference at Weston Park to bring together 20 countries with an interest in a stable Afghanistan.

And we have now appointed a senior Foreign Office official, Robert Cooper, who is well-known to many of you as an author and thinker on post-modern states, to develop our thinking and to work with the UN and other international partners on a consensus.

These efforts are bearing fruit. Now, for the first time in three decades, there is broad agreement among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and among Afghanistanís neighbours that a broad-based, self-sustaining government is the right solution. We shall all be working to reduce tensions and mutual suspicions between Afghanistanís neighbours.

Afghanistan should come to know the outside world as a benign, not threatening, influence.

My third principle is that the United Nations should play the leading role in any transition. As I have said, there are no state institutions worth speaking of in Kabul: no executive, no judiciary, no legislature, no civil service. Any interim government arriving there would have to bring much of its own administration with it.

There is only one body which can properly facilitate this ñ the United Nations. I was delighted when the Nobel Committee decided to award this yearís Peace Prize to Kofi

Annan and the UN. In Afghanistan, they will have yet another chance to show the world how much they are needed.

Very few organisations have stood by the Afghan people throughout the impossible conditions of the last few years. The Red Cross is one. The UN is another. Through its humanitarian aid and other programmes in Afghanistan, the UN has more experience of the country than any other body. It has been running many services throughout the country. It also has behind it the relevant experience of helping to rebuild a shattered nation in Cambodia, East Timor and Kosovo.

I especially welcome the appointment of Lakhdar Brahimi, the distinguished Algerian diplomat and statesman, no stranger to this audience, who will not only oversee the life-saving efforts of the humanitarian coalition, but also the later political process as Afghanistan moves towards a fully representative, multi-ethnic broad-based government.

Ambassador Brahimi will provide a central focus at the UN, and as the global community devises a unified policy, we should take our lead from him.

This will involve identifying tasks and allocating them to particular organisations and countries.

Only the UN has the global reach, the instruments and the expertise to provide effective relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan. It will need to do this in an active partnership with committed states, with those which share borders with Afghanistan or are very close to it, like India, with the Permanent Members of the Security Council, and with others who have a close regional interest. The EU will, I am sure, have an important role too.

My fourth principle is that we must be prepared to devote the resources and the political will needed to complete the task.

The early phase of a transition will be crucial. We should identify a number of projects which can have an immediate impact to alleviate suffering ñ within the first 100 days ñ to give credibility and legitimacy to an interim regime.

As well as humanitarian aid, these might include reconstruction of housing and some first repair work on water and irrigation. We will need teams of people ready to go in and make these work straight away.

But we should also be prepared for the long haul. The international community has to meet Afghanistanís needs, as identified by Ambassador Brahimi. He may need planning facilities to help him. Civilian policing assistance has, again and again, proved essential in post-conflict situations.

And troops, whether in UN blue helmets or as a multinational force, could be required to protect civilians and to provide a security environment in which the UN could work. Nor do we rule out non-Taliban Afghan forces perhaps playing a role in this.

Afghanistanís development needs will be huge. The cost of rebuilding Bosnia was $5 billion. Afghanistan has four times Bosniaís population. Reconstructing Afghanistan could take five to ten years to complete.

But we have to be ready to bear the cost, because if we do not, the price we pay will be far greater. We will pay it in more terrorist atrocities, more lives lost and more economies disrupted.

Only a real, sustained commitment stands any chance of providing the people of Afghanistan with a country free from domination by terrorists and criminals.

If it is needed, we should be prepared to contribute to an International Fund for Afghanistan, perhaps administered by the UN. But this should not be to the detriment of our development efforts elsewhere, nor of the UNís vital efforts in other parts of the world.

What this crisis has proved, more than ever, is that we need the UN ñ and all countries should be ready to devote the resources the UN needs to carry out the broad range of its duties throughout the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a duty to the people of Afghanistan, just as we have a duty to our own citizens at home.

Today, it is clear that these duties coincide. Bringing order out of chaos is one of the great tasks of foreign policy for the 21st century.

During the Cold War, there were those in the West who drew inspiration from the so-called domino theory: that if Communism were not stopped from taking over Korea, or Vietnam, or Nicaragua, or Angola, it would infect neighbouring countries until we found ourselves encircled.

Historians will argue for decades to come about whether the domino theory really applied to Communism.

But I have no doubt that the domino theory does apply to the chaos of failed states. The collapse of the Democratic Republic of the Congo into conflict in the 1990s sucked in countries throughout the Great Lakes region of Africa. One of the biggest obstacles to peace in Sierra Leone was continuing violence in neighbouring Liberia.

The reason we remain committed to stability in the former Yugoslavia is that any slide back into ethnic conflict there could suck in the whole region, which already includes our NATO allies and will soon include EU partners.

The chaos which Afghanistan has suffered is a threat to the stability of its neighbours in Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia. The drugs trade and the refugee crisis have already seriously undermined them. And we now know all too graphically the chaos and fear it brought out of a clear blue sky one autumn morning in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

The Cold War pitted two ideologies against one another in a battle for supremacy. The war against terrorism is different. It is a war in which all legitimate governments and all sovereign states are on the same side.

One day, not far in the future, we should be able to welcome the people of Afghanistan back into the family of sovereign nation states, as a fully fledged member of the international community. We want to see a sovereign, independent Afghanistan which sustains its own statehood, in which no one interferes and which functions as a part of the legitimate global economy, generating wealth and welfare for all of its people.

Rebuilding Afghanistan will be the next vital step towards a victory in which we all can share ñ victory over terrorism, victory over poverty and victory over chaos.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 210/01 Tuesday 23 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS MOVE ON CANNABIS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, tonight welcomed news that the Home Secretary David Blunkett wants to see a change to the law covering cannabis to make possession no longer an arrestable offence

The drug which would remain illegal would be re-classified from a class 'B' to a class 'C' drug making it available to be prescribed by a doctor for medicinal use.

Eighteen months ago, the Pendle MP predicted that the medical use of cannabis would be given the go ahead by the Government. The MP has been a long time campaigner to return the drug to the medicine chest. It could be prescribed lawfully by doctors prior to the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act.

Last year, the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) approved an application to conduct a clinical trial with a cannabis-based medicine. The purpose of the trial was to demonstrate safety and efficacy in a limited number of subjects, and to establish the necessary dosage regimen and delivery mechanisms to provide the most effective relief to sufferers of multiple sclerosis and other neurological disorders.

The MP is secretary of the Parliamentary All Party MS Group.

Note to Editors: In July 1997 the British Medical Association voted overwhelmingly for cannabis products to be made available for medical use. Before the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act came into force, outlawing medical use of the drug, doctors could prescribe cannabis which was often dispensed in tincture form, like cough mixture.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 211/01 Wednesday 24 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

RATING SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Health has published figures showing the performance of the country's social services. The indicators show there has been an improvement for the second year running. They also show that the variation in performance between the Councils continues to decrease. Lancashire County Council has come out with a middle performance rating.

Local MP Gordon Prentice said: "We all want a high quality social services no matter where we live and it is common-sense for Councils that are doing well to pass on good practice to those who have room for improvement."

From next summer the government will be introducing star ratings for Councils with social services responsibilities, showing a more rounded assessment of each Council's performance in a simple format the public can understand.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 212/01 Wednesday 24 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

STATEMENT BY MUSLIM PARLIAMENTARIANS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the statement published today by Parliamentarians of the Muslim faith. Following a meeting with the Prime Minister yesterday afternoon, Khalid Mehmood MP, Mohammed Sarwar MP, Lord Patel of Blackburn, Lord Ahmed and Baroness Uddin issued this statement:

"The whole of the civilised world has been united in condemnation of the atrocities which took place on 11th September. These killed many thousands; hundreds of these were UK citizens; hundreds were of the Muslim faith. But even if no British citizens were killed, even if no Muslims had been killed, we should still have taken the same view of the atrocities, for they were an attack on the whole of humanity, of which we are an indivisible part.

"As the Holy Koran says "in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other."

"Along with many other international organisations, the Organisation of Islamic Countries last week rightly expressed their outrage at the atrocities.

"Osama bin Laden and his followers do not speak for Muslims here or abroad. Their message of hate and destruction offends every principle we hold so dear and the chilling statement issued recently warning Muslims to keep away from aeroplanes and tall buildings is a sure sign of their culpability and their evil intent.

"No one likes taking military action, and every effort has been made to avoid it. But countering terrorism of this sort, and

more follows

ensuring that further atrocities against Muslims and others are not carried out is essential.

“The fact that the Taliban regime refused to respond to the clear warnings given to it means that, while we greatly regret the need for military action, we believe it was inevitable.

“Our stand against the evil of terrorism has been backed by the whole of the civilised world ñ including political and spiritual leaders of Arab and Islamic nations. We note, in particular, the public condemnation of this terrorism by the Grand Imam of the Al Azhar Mosque, Sheikh Tantawi; and we applaud particularly the courageous stand taken by President Musharraf of Pakistan. He has said:

”We tried to bring moderation into the Taliban government. We made all possible efforts to extradite Usama bin Laden but unfortunately we could not achieve what we were trying and therefore the action which started last night.

”I know that the desire of all the coalition forces, (is) that this operation should not be perceived as a war against Afghanistan or the people of Afghanistan, the Afghans.

“It is an action against terrorists, terrorism, their sanctuaries and their supporters.” [Pakistan TV, Islamabad]

“We strongly believe that military action must be carefully targeted, proportionate, and consistent with international law. We were therefore glad to receive assurances from the Prime Minister that he agreed with us, and that he saw military action are part of an overall political, economic and humanitarian strategy to end international terrorism, to rebuild Afghanistan as a safe and more prosperous society, and to reduce conflicts elsewhere in the world. In this respect we warmly welcome the meeting on Monday between President Arafat of the Palestinian Authority, and our Prime Minister, and the efforts now being made to reinvigorate the Middle East Peace Process. Justice for the Palestinians, with their own viable state, alongside the State of Israel, and peace with security for all in the area is the only way forward.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 213/01 Wednesday 24 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR OPEN BORDER BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today urged the British Government to press Pakistan to open its border to Afghan refugees. The Pakistan Government has adopted a closed border policy fearing a tidal wave of refugees into the country.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP quizzed International Development Secretary, Clare Short, on her recent meeting in Islamabad with Pakistan's President, General Musharraf. The MP wanted to know if Pakistan would change its policy and open the border with Afghanistan if the international community committed itself to underwrite the cost of looking after the refugees.

Clare Short explained that Britain had allocated £40m to respond to the current crisis facing Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries. She confirmed the British Government wanted an open border.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "After the Soviet Union left Afghanistan the rest of the world forgot about a country that had been laid to waste. Pakistan was left to shoulder the burden alone and it has millions of refugees within its borders. This puts incredible strain on the country's resources."

"Pakistan is getting a debt relief package but much more is needed."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 214/01 Thursday 25 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES NEW APPROACH TO THE REFORM OF EMERGENCY CARE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the announcement this week of £118 million new investment and a new approach to tackling the problems inherent in A&E.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This extra cash has to be put to good use and I want it to make a difference. The problems are well known - patients waiting too long to be seen by a nurse or doctor when they arrive at hospital, to have

diagnostic tests, for a bed to be found for them on a ward, or even for an assessment to allow them to be discharged from hospital."

The MP's comments coincided with the publication today of the Audit Commission report on Accident & Emergency Departments in England and Wales, following their previous reports in 1996 and 1998. The Report says waiting times in A&E are increasing.

Over 15 million people attend Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments every year. More than come into contact with any other hospital service. Some of these people are acutely ill whilst others are not seriously ill but will still need assessment by a health professional.

The Government is investing an additional £40 million between now and 2003, to recruit 600 additional A&E nurses. And they will be in addition to the 20,000 extra nurses promised by 2005. This will mean patients with less serious conditions can be treated by a nurse. The result will be shorter waiting times for patients.

The plans allow for the recruitment of an additional 183 A&E consultants by 2004 - an overall increase of 40%.

more follows

MP WELCOMES NEW APPROACH TO THE REFORM OF EMERGENCY CARE

The MP added: "Emergency admissions to hospital have risen by 20% in the last 10 years and we have very high levels of bed occupancy. This often means people have to wait longer than they should for hospital admission. Money is now going in to the front line. We need to tackle this issue with real energy."

Note to Editors: The Government is addressing the problems of emergency needs competing with routine (elective) needs. The NHS is:

• Separating emergency work from routine work, each having their own dedicated staff and resources so that emergencies do no lead to the cancellation of planned surgery.

• Streaming patients so that when they get to A&E they are separated into less and more serious conditions so that dedicated staff can deal with each stream. The additional 600 nurses will help to deliver the streaming. Research suggests that by doing this the risk of waiting more than 1 hour falls by 30%.

• 24 hours a day, 7 days a week availability of diagnostic services, in place of the usual 8 hours a day, Monday to Friday. Recruitment drives are already underway for more radiographers and radiologists. Possible ways forward on this include an extension of the working day, use of the private sector and purchase of new technologies in order to make this happen.

• Breaking down the demarcations which exist between staff which can mean barriers to team working, duplication of services and asking patients for the same information time and time again.

Use of staff in A&E is varied and not enough hospitals make significant use of Emergency Nurse Practitioners (ENPs).

The NHS Plan has set a tough new target to reduce the maximum wait in A&E from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge to four hours by 2004.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 215/01 Thursday 25 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BRITISH CRIME SURVEY

The British Crime Survey gives the most accurate picture of what is really happening to crime rates because it records the crimes that people experience, whether or not they report it to the police.

The latest survey shows: crime has fallen by 22% since 1997. The rate of crime has shown its biggest ever-annual fall - a drop of 12% between 1999 and 2000. The chance of becoming a victim of crime is at its lowest for 20 years since the British Crime Survey started. This is the third fall in the BCS crime rate in a row. The total number of crimes reported by victims is a third lower than the peak of 1995. Violent crime is down 19% from 1995 to 2000.

These figures confirm the trend that crime is coming down. This year, the police will enjoy their largest increase in numbers for 10 years, and will have a record 130,000 officers by March 2004. Police spending will increase by £1.6 billion by 2003/04 and by 10% in the next year alone.

Just under 9000 people were surveyed for their experience of crime in 2000. People are now more likely to report crimes to the police. Labour has reversed the trend of reduced crime reporting. This is up from 44% in 1997 to 47% in 2000.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, commented: “We all want to see the end outmoded practices and help them spend more time fighting crime. Thereís a study to see how the police really spend their time, it will identify ways to cut red tape and blockages so they can concentrate on tackling crime. And, a new Police Reform Bill will come before Parliament this session. Last week we published the Proceeds of Crime Bill, giving the courts the power to seize the ill-gotten gains of criminals ñ that is so often used to fund more crime.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 216/01 Monday 29 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CHURCH MASSACRE IN PAKISTAN

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today expressed shock and incomprehension at the massacre yesterday of at least 16 Christians at worship in a church at Bahawalpur in Pakistan.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the MP said: “What on earth can be going on in the minds of people who can do something like this?”

The MP added: “This is the product of religious fanaticism and it is sick. People should be free to worship their own God in their own way, without fear of being gunned down.”

The President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, immediately condemned the attack and pledged that those responsible would be tracked down and brought to justice.

President Musharraf said: “The method used and the inhuman tactics employed clearly indicates involvement of trained terrorists or organisations bent upon creating discord and disharmony in Pakistan where Christians and Muslims have always lived in peace with mutual respect for each other.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 217/01 Tuesday 30 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MAPPING THE WAY

Walkers will soon be able to roam the countryside using official maps which show open access land. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the Countryside Agency is in the process of producing maps of open countryside and registered common land which will show the areas where there will be a new right of access for walkers. The first two draft maps, showing South East and North West England, will be published on 12 November 2001.

Long time countryside activist, Gordon Prentice MP, expressed delight that the maps will soon be available.

He said: “After many years of campaigning for greater public access it will be great to see the first maps - especially as Pendle will be featured! It is important that as many people as possible have a look at these maps to check there are no areas left off.”

He continued: “There is a three month public consultation and this will be the only chance that walkers and others will be able to put forward their views on the maps. I want to encourage as many people as possible to take a look at these maps and pass on their views.”

The Countryside Act was passed by Parliament nearly a year ago. It provides a public right of access on foot to certain types of uncultivated land in England and Wales and includes measures to improve the footpath network and provide greater protection for wildlife and the countryside.

The maps will be available on the Countryside Agencies website at www.countryside.gov.uk on 12 November and in local authority offices and selected libraries from 16 November. The deadline for responses on this consultation is 11 February 2002.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 218/01 Tuesday 30 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR NEW UN ROLE IN SEARCH FOR PEACE IN KASHMIR

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, to get the United Nations to broker a settlement in Kashmir. The future of Kashmir has been a matter of dispute between Pakistan and India for over 50 years.

Speaking in the Commons during Foreign Office questions this afternoon, the MP said: “The eyes of the world are fixed on Afghanistan but what about Kashmir, next door, which is the real powder keg. Pakistan today accused India of promoting state terrorism. They say Indian troops killed 22 Kashmiris and burnt down 26 houses. Where is at all going to end?”

The MP continued: “Isn’t it time for a new initiative involving the United Nations? General Musharraf is attending the UN General Assembly in New York on 10 November. Why can’t we get the UN to make a fresh bid to reach a settlement. Why can’t the UN convene a conference of all the parties to plot a way forward?”

The Foreign Secretary told the Commons: “The Kashmir dispute can only be settled by direct discussion between India and Pakistan. A mediator of the UN could have a role - but only if invited to.”

Straw said there was no way forward in exchanging the texts of resolutions.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: “This conflict has been dragging on for so long, with no end in sight. It is easy to despair.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 219/01 Tuesday 30 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CRIMINALS TO LOSE THEIR ILL GOTTEN GAINS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a fresh crackdown on criminals who stash away the proceeds of their crimes, apparently beyond the reach of the law.

This afternoon (Tuesday), the House of Commons will debate the Proceeds of Crime Bill which the MP says is a vital step in the battle against drug dealers and organised crime.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Criminals deserve what they get. They should not be allowed to keep one penny from their criminal activities. This should have been done years ago."

"Criminals are motivated by profit. They traffic in drugs, illegal immigrants, and contraband goods, building up large criminal empires that reach far and wide into our lives. As it stands, most criminals get to enjoy the profits of their crimes, because the current laws have such limited powers of confiscation."

"Taking the profit out of crime will help dismantle and disrupt these criminal enterprises. It is not acceptable that people should enjoy the proceeds of criminal activity and live a life of luxury including big houses, swimming pools and fast cars when it is built on the misery of victims or activities which damage or exploit society."

"This Bill will be a major step in taking the profit out of crime and dismantling and disrupting the organised crime empires. It will remove the money that is their motivation and their lifeblood. Together with the emergency measures recently announced, it will help fight terrorism by denying terrorist their resources."

more follows

CRIMINALS TO LOSE THEIR ILL GOTTEN GAINS

Note to Editors: Drug and other criminal activities are responsible for around 2% of the UK's GDP. Current laws are outdated and inadequate. Less than a quarter of 1% of criminal turnover was confiscated last year.

The Bill would amalgamate and strengthen existing criminal confiscation powers in one Act; introduce a new power of civil recovery; set up an Assets Recovery Agency to tax suspected criminal assets and

extend investigation powers. It will also re-define money laundering offences to close identified loopholes. Once recovered, criminal wealth will be recycled back into the community to pay for more asset recovery work, drug rehabilitation and treatment programmes and CCTV.

The Current Situation
Because it is relatively easy to make money from crime in Britain, organised crime is encouraged to do business here. We know that two thirds of recorded crime is motivated by money. Currently drug trafficking, guns and trade in illegal immigrants offer huge profits. We need new laws, which make it more difficult to make and hold onto these profits. Tougher laws should reduce organised crime, make it more difficult to sell drugs and have a knock-on effect in bringing down burglaries and muggings which are often done to pay for a drug habit.

The value of illegal drugs transactions in the UK account for 1% of GDP - £8.5 billion. A further £11 billion is generated by other criminal activity. In 1999/2000, only £49 million was recovered through existing confiscation and forfeiture powers.

It is estimated that in the UK alone there are around 400 crime barons with assets of £440 million - the top 39 alone are worth £220 million. The criminal actions of these individuals and their associates affect us all. They run the local drug dealers on our streets and are often linked to the muggings and burglaries that plague innocent people's lives.

On top of all this, it's estimated that losses through fraud range from £5 billion a year upwards. Police forces estimate there are at least 370 local crime barons that could be subject to recovery, but are not being taken forward because of lack of powers, expertise and resources.

Crime barons are often indirectly responsible for volume crime. On the basis of research from National Criminal Intelligence Service and the National Crime Squad, £1 million confiscated from a drug dealer would prevent him from buying 50 kilos of heroin at wholesale prices. Just 1 kilo of heroin distributed at street level could result in:

£220,000 worth of stolen property; 220 victims of burglary; 220 recorded crime at a cost of £100 for each initial police response; £650 - £10,000 cost to prosecute each burglar; 1078 addict crimes per month; £75,000 for treatment for 1 HIV positive addict

While the National Crime Squad seized almost 900kg heroin in 2000, confiscation orders resulted in £25 million being confiscated, potentially preventing the importation of up to 1250 kilos of heroin.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 220/01 Wednesday 31 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO MEET ROLLS ROYCE CHIEFS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is meeting Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, and other top management people next Monday, 5 November 2001.

As the MP reported on 22 October the meeting is to discuss the crisis facing aviation and aerospace and the company's plans for the future.

The company recently announced big job losses across the UK - attributing the decision to the fallout from the atrocity in America on 11 September.

The MP said: "I'm expecting a full and detailed briefing on the company's plans."

The Leader of Pendle Council, Azhar Ali, and Councillor Frank Neal are meeting the Rolls Royce Barnoldswick Managing Director, Hedley Hazell, on 15 November.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 221/01 Wednesday 31 October 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES MOVE ON BETA-INTERFERON

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed Government moves today to make beta interferon more widely available to people with MS. The MP is President of the Burnley and Pendle MS Society and secretary of the all party parliamentary MS group.

Speaking today at Westminster, the MP said: "The plain fact is that people with MS who could benefit from beta interferon should get it. No ifs or buts. MS could strike any of us at any time - and that is why we have an NHS and a system of national insurance to help us when we fall ill. The softening of the Government's position is encouraging."

Multiple Sclerosis is one of the most common diseases of the central nervous system and it affects 80-90,000 people in the UK. It usually strikes in early adulthood and the disabilities which accompany it can range from impairment of speech, vision and

movement to complete paralysis. The cause of multiple sclerosis is unknown and at present, there is no cure.

Four categories of the disease are recognised by experts, of which the two most common are: Relapsing remitting (RRMS) which affects around 45% of MS sufferers and is characterised by periodic lapses followed by full or partial recovery; Secondary progressive (SPMS) which affects around 33% of sufferers and is characterised by more severe disability.

Note to Editors: The Government's position is this: The Government referred Beta Interferon to the National Institute for Clinical Excellence to assess its effectiveness. In August this year, NICE issued a Provisional Appraisal Determination (PAD) on beta-interferon, which stated that the Department of Health and manufacturers might usefully consider what actions could be taken,

more follows

jointly, to enable any of the four medicines appraised in this guidance to be secured for patients in the NHS in England and Wales, in a manner which could be considered cost-effective.

NICE issued its Final Appraisal Determination (FAD) on 29 October on which consultees have 10 days to appeal. NICE's FAD advised that beta-interferon does not represent a cost-effective use of NHS resources.

However, the FAD again recommended that the Department of Health undertake discussions with manufacturers. That is why the Government is currently in discussion with four manufacturers of beta-interferon and related products.

The Government has launched these negotiations because there may be alternative ways of providing the drug on the NHS which could change the assumptions on which the NICE provisional determinations have rested.

While discussions are underway, the Government has yet to reach an agreement. But it believes that by widening the discussions it can reach a constructive agreement.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 222/01 Monday 5 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TELLS CHURCH OF ENGLAND TO PREPARE FOR FLOODS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, warned the Church of England to safeguard its treasures by moving historic artefacts out of cellars and basements which could be prone to flooding.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP - who takes a close interest in Church of England issues - told Church Commissioner, Stuart Bell MP, that the Church should prepare for floods.

The MP told the House: “A year ago water filled the cellars of the official residence of the Archbishop of York. He was paddling around in his wellies in the basement of Bishopthorpe Palace. Money needs to be spent now to protect our church heritage from the ever present threat of flooding.”

The MP warned of the embarrassment if there should be a repetition of last year’s floods - without appropriate action having been taken.

This year the Government is spending £400m on flood protection.

Bell told the MP action had been taken.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 223/01 Monday 5 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

ROLLS ROYCE JOB LOSSES - DETAILS IN TWO WEEKS

Rolls Royce Chief Executive, John Rose, this afternoon told Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, that details of the job losses across the UK would be released in mid November and that RR employees would be the first to know. Jobs will go from 31 March 2002.

Rose, joined by other top RR executives, spelt out in detail how the tragedy of 11 September had impacted on the aviation and aerospace industries. Before September 11, RR had an order book totalling £14.9 billion.

Rose told MPs representing constituencies with RR plants that airlines across the world have reduced capacity and had grounded and put into storage 800 planes. Over 100,000 job losses had already been announced by airlines.

Prentice said: “We heard that Boeing deliveries had fallen to the low 400s instead of 520 aircraft. And Airbus had fallen to the mid 300s instead of 400.”

The MP continued: “RR forecast that civil engine deliveries will fall by 30% in 2002/3 and that civil spares will be fl;at next year. The Chief Executive told us that the company expects to lose £1 billion worth of business next year and £1 billion the year after as a result of the collapse in orders. They estimate that profit on the civil aerospace side will be down by about 50% next year.”

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “It was a very sombre discussion lasting about one and a half hours. We agreed to meet again soon. In the meantime, I shall be talking to the Government to see what it can do to help. These are bad times.”

Contact: mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 224/01 Tuesday 6 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

CRACKDOWN PROMISED ON ROGUE PRIVATE SECTOR LANDLORDS

The Government is to crack down on rogue private sector landlords who neglect to maintain their properties and often rent them out to anti social tenants.

Housing Minister, Charles Falconer, who visited Pendle last month, has told local MP, Gordon Prentice, that the Government is “proposing a tough new licensing scheme for private landlords in areas of low demand. This will mean landlords have to meet minimum standards, and unscrupulous landlords will be stopped from letting.”

The Government has recently issued a consultation paper on its proposals for selective licensing of private landlords in areas of low demand. It can be found on the Department of Transport and Local Government web site: www.housing.dtlr.gov.uk.

Speaking at Westminster, Gordon Prentice said: “These to powers to license private landlords could make a tremendous difference to parts of Pendle. These new powers will be popular and they are needed.”

Note to Editors: The Housing Minister, Charles Falconer, wrote to the MP on 2 November as follows: Thank you for your letter of 15 October about housing problems in Pendle. As you will recall, I was able to see some of these problems for myself when I visited your constituency - and other parts of East Lancashire - on Friday 19 October. I can assure you that I share your concern.

The Housing Policy Statement "The Way Forward for Housing", the Urban White Paper and the National Action Plan on Neighbourhood renewal form a comprehensive framework for tackling many of the problems associated with low demand and for making our towns and cities places people want to

more follows

CRACKDOWN PROMISED ON ROGUE PRIVATE SECTOR LANDLORDS

live in again, We are also encouraging local authorities to develop strategies for all housing in their localities, including private housing. Low demand is to a great extent a local problem that requires a local solution, and the local authority is best placed to do this.

We recognise that this is a serious problem in the private sector as well as the public one. This is why we are taking forward proposals to reform legislation on housing renewal in the private sector. This will make it easier for local authorities to target interventions on areas of poor condition private stock and will, in turn, make it easier to clear and redevelop areas facing abandonment.

We are removing incentives to keep properties empty and since April 2000, empty dwellings requiring or undergoing major or repair work which have been exempt from council tax for more than a year are now subject to the standard 50% council tax attracted by other unoccupied dwellings. In the Pre-Budget Report we announced very generous capital allowances for flats, over shops and reforms to the VAT system which will go a considerable way towards harnessing the potential of derelict and underused buildings. And we are committed to supporting the Empty Homes Agency, which is working with local authorities to devise strategies to bring empty homes back into use. We recently confirmed renewed funding for the foreseeable future that will enable the Agency to continue its excellent work.

We are proposing a tough new licensing scheme for private landlords in areas of low demand. This will mean landlords have to meet minimum standards, and unscrupulous landlords will be stopped from letting. We have recently issued a consultation paper on our proposals for selective licensing of private landlords in areas of low demand.

East Lancashire has a unique mix of housing problems. That much was obvious from my visit, However, I am confident that together we can tackle them. When I met with the East Lancashire Partnership I asked them to study these problems and to come back to me with detailed proposals for the way forward. I look forward to receiving this report and assure you that I will give its proposals full consideration.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 225/01 Tuesday 6 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP TO MEET PAKISTAN PRESIDENT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to meet the President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf this Thursday (8 November) at Westminster.

The President is visiting London for a meeting with the Prime Minister, Tony Blair. He is meeting separately MPs who are members of the all party Pakistan Group.

Speaking before the meeting, the Pendle MP said: “These are difficult times for Pakistan - and for the rest of us. The reverberations from Afghanistan are spreading across the entire world. General Musharraf is a key player and I am looking forward to our discussions.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 226/01 Wednesday 7 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP HITS OUT AT HOUSE OF LORDS REFORM PLANS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has lashed Government plans to reform the House of Lords.

The Government’s plans for the second stage of Lords reform were outlined this afternoon to the House of Commons by the Leader of the House, Robin Cook. He

described the shape of the new Upper Chamber with 600 members - 120 of whom would be elected, most of the rest appointed but with places for the law lords, bishops of the Church of England and other faith communities.

The Pendle MP said: “We are told the proposals will create a modern second chamber. They may do many things but they won’t do is create a modern chamber! The proposals will be crushed by their own complexity. What we need is a small elected upper chamber. Legitimacy only comes with election.”

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “These plans are a real dog’s breakfast. We are going to have a new House of Lords Appointments Commission to select people to serve in the appointed part of the Lords. But look what a mess the present Appointments Commission got into with their ludicrous selection of so called “people’s peers”.

“We need to go back to first principles on this. Election is better than selection.”

The MP added: “Some people say an elected Lords would challenge the primacy of the Commons. Not so. The powers of the reformed Lords could and should be set out clearly in statute. There is no problem there.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 227/01 Wednesday 7 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

COMMONS CALL FOR DEMOCRACY COMMISSION TO TACKLE CIVIC CRISIS

A Report by the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) - today calls for the establishment of a Democracy Commission to combat the crisis in public participation in government. PASC points to the record low turnout in June's General Election - just 59 per cent - as evidence of widespread "civic disengagement'.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, a member of the Public Administration Select Committee, says all political parties need to address the issue urgently. :Most of us take democracy for granted. But it needs to be constantly tended and renewed.”

Other forms of public consultation - including the Government's polling by the People's Panel are also seen by the Committee as failing to increase citizens' involvement in decision-making.

The Committee says: "Not since the extension of the suffrage in 1918 has there been such a low level of participation in the electoral process. The reasons for it may be debated, but not its seriousness for our democracy. We find it extraordinary that this collapse in electoral participation, put alongside other evidence on civic disengagement, has not been treated as a civic crisis demanding an appropriate response. Political life has simply continued as if nothing has happened. We believe that a Democracy Commission should be established as a matter of urgency to consider how this crisis can be responded to constructively and with imagination, and we believe that our Report makes a contribution to this process."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 228/01 Thursady 8 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOVERNMENT ACTION FOR AVIATION INDUSTRY

The Government has been in close contact with UK airlines since 11 September to discuss both the short term and long term challenges faced by the aviation industry. We have also been having discussions with the Trade Unions.

The UK led the way in extending our commitment to underwrite insurance for the industry.

The Government remains totally committed to a healthy long-term future for the aviation industry. We are doing all we can for the industry to cope with the immediate difficulties caused by the events of September 11th but believe the industry will emerge stronger than ever before in the longer-term.

We are totally focussed on maintaining the very highest standards in security and safety at our airports and on our aircraft. The UK is driving hard this agenda in Europe.

1. Economic help

No decisions have yet been taken about further financial support. Inevitably, any discussions with the airlines have been held in terms of strict commercial confidentiality and we do not propose to comment on them in any way.

Control of state aid is a matter for the European Commission, which would determine whether any assistance offered is compatible with the Treaty. The UK is particularly concerned to avoid large-scale state handouts to airlines that were suffering major problems long before September 11th.

The Emergency aid measures which the Commission considers compatible with the EC Treaty include :

compensation for losses directly attributable to the closure of airspace in the four days following 11 September;
insurance guarantees for war-related third party risk where the market has failed;
assistance with the costs of enhanced security measures.

The Government has re-stated our view that even before the events of 11 September several airlines faced commercial difficulties, and that there was a pressing need for consolidation in the EU industry.

On 25 October, David Jamieson made a whistle stop tour of four regional airports to encourage the public to keep flying (PN 458). He visited Gatwick, Bristol, Edinburgh and Birmingham airports.

On 5 November, Transport Minister John Spellar met John McDonnell, fellow MPs and representatives of the air transport industry, trade unions and local communities to discuss Heathrow airport and its surrounding communities.

2. Skills

Speaking at an AEEU conference, Transport Minister John Spellar made clear the Government's commitment to the future of the aviation industry and its support in developing training programmes for aeronautical engineering skills to avoid a long-term skills shortage.

3. Security

The DTLR has been working with other departments since 11 September to review and improve levels of security. A number of measures are being considered and we are keeping security levels under constant review.

The Government welcomes the EU's intention to legislate in the field of aviation security. The Secretary of State Stephen Byers welcomed the Commission's proposal to raise security standards across Europe. He stated "it is vital that other European states adopt stringent measures - such as those already in place in the UK - to set a high level of security throughout Europe."

4. Open Skies

We currently have a window of opportunity to reach a new agreement to replace Bermuda II. We must not slacken the pace now.

Transport Minister John Spellar has held talks with Michael Jackson, Deputy Secretary of Transportation, to emphasise the importance the Government attaches to the liberalisation of the UK/US aviation market.

5. NATS

The Government remains committed to the Public Private Partnership deal.

NATS and the Airline Group are currently assessing the impact of the events of 11 September on NATSí business, and will be presenting their business plan to the Department by the end of this month as required under the deal. DTLR officials have been involved in these discussions.

The Government has received no request for financial assistance for NATS. If any such request were received, it would be looked at on its merits. However, there is a risk that it could fall foul of European state aid rules.

The Government is confident that NATS management is dealing with the current situation carefully and responsibly.

Safety will not be affected. No action will be taken that will jeopardise safety in any way.

6. Future Issues

The Government intends to publish an air transport White Paper in the second half of 2002. This will provide a policy framework for the future of aviation and airports in the UK.

The White Paper will be preceded by public consultation on the findings of the studies the Department is undertaking on air services and airports in all parts of the UK.

A series of regional air service studies covering Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the South West, Midlands and the North of England have been completed. A further study of airport issues in the South East and East of England (SERAS) is being undertaken at present. These seven consultation documents will be published early next year.

The DTLR has also published a national consultation document, The Future of Aviation, which examined the issues underpinning air transport policy. A summary

of these responses will be published shortly. These together with the responses to the regional consultations will feed into the White Paper.

For more information, contact DTLR Special Advisors on 020 7944 4377

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

Immediate Release. No 229/01 Wednesday 14 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

EAST LANCS MPs MEET TREASURY CHIEF IN BID FOR HOUSING AND INDUSTRY CASH

Burnley MP, Peter Pike, and his Pendle neighbour, Gordon Prentice, are meeting the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Smith, in a bid to secure much needed help for East Lancashire.

The MPs say the area has uniquely bad housing which can only be addressed with help from the Government. They are also calling for help for manufacturing industry which has hit the headlines repeatedly over recent months as firms have announced lays offs and closures. The loss of major manufacturer Michelin from Burnley is, say the MPs, a huge blow.

Peter Pike met Smith today (Wednesday) at the Treasury in an hour long private meeting. Prentice meets Smith tomorrow (Thursday).

Speaking in advance of Thursday's meeting, Gordon Prentice, said: "The Treasury controls the purse strings. And while it is good to have key ministers such as Lord Falconer - the Housing Minister - visit the area, we need the cash to get things done."

"There is no shortage of ideas, energy or commitment in East Lancashire."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 234/01 Tuesday 20 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TELLS BRITONS FIGHTING FOR THE TALIBAN "DON'T COME BACK"

British citizens who travel to Afghanistan to take up arms on behalf of the Taliban should stay over there says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP added that any British citizen who is found to have taken up arms against British troops in Afghanistan - or elsewhere - would be prosecuted and if found guilty of treason would be sent to prison for a very long time..

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Let there be no misunderstanding about this. Any British citizen who fights against our soldiers will be prosecuted. No-one in these circumstances will be allowed to come back to Britain and continue with life as if nothing had happened."

The MP added: "UK citizens cannot cherry pick which UK laws apply or don't apply to them. No-one commits treason against the United Kingdom and gets away with it."

Note to Editors: In a statement to Parliament last week, Prime Minister Tony Blair welcomed the decisive defeat of the Taliban across Afghanistan, but warned that huge military and humanitarian challenges still remain.

"We have not yet achieved one key aim of the action: to deny Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaíida network the safe haven in Afghanistan from which they have exported instability to their neighbours and terror to the world."

"The UK will therefore continue to play a full role in the military, diplomatic and humanitarian campaign in Afghanistan. Militarily, the UK's Joint Rapid Reaction Force has been put on standby as a precautionary measure to allow a quick response should British forces be required in the area. These include elements from 3 Commando and 16 Air Assault Brigades and a range of supporting assets including RAF air transport, support

more follows

helicopters, engineers, logistic teams and explosive ordnance experts. The main purpose of these troops would be to assist multinational efforts to make safe the humanitarian supply routes that are now opening up as a result of the success of coalition military action.

"For the people liberated from Taliban brutality, we can finally get aid through unobstructed. Plans are now being made for the international staff of the United Nations, Red Cross and Non-Governmental Organisations to return to Afghanistan. In addition, we will be able to accelerate deliveries to areas in central Afghanistan which will become harder to access as winter sets in so that sufficient stockpiles can be built up closer to the people who need them. We will show the people of Afghanistan that we are as committed to relieving their suffering as the Taliban regime was to causing it."

"While the structure of post-Taliban Afghanistan will be for the Afghan people to determine, the UK will however provide strong diplomatic and humanitarian support to the aspirations of Afghan parties committed to delivering a broad-based, representative, multi-ethnic government. As Foreign Secretary Jack Straw made clear at the UN General Assembly meeting in New York this week, "We have to bring the same energy to the coalition for building this new Afghanistan that we brought to the military coalition, and stick with the Afghan people for the long term."

"We must never forget why we are engaged in this action: it is because on 11 September Osama bin Laden and his al-Qa'ida network carried out the worst terrorist atrocity in history. It is to bring them to justice, and to eliminate them as a threat to world peace and security that we are acting as we are. As the updated evidence presented to parliament makes clear, far from hiding their guilt, Bin Laden and his associates gloat about the atrocities of 11 September. Bin Laden himself said on 20 October in an unbroadcast video tape, "If avenging the killing of our people is terrorism, let history be a witness that we are terrorists."

"We will work with the international community to help rebuild Afghanistan and are committed to keeping the focus on the fight against international terrorism to ensure that terrorist atrocities such as that on the United States can never happen again."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

Immediate Release. No 235/01 Wednesday 21 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION BILL

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a far reaching Bill which will guarantee warm and safe homes for thousands of people in East Lancashire.

The MP is supporting Des Turner's Home Energy Conservation Bill which comes up for debate on 30 November.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "This Bill is enormously significant. It has two key provisions. The first is the introduction of a licensing scheme for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Owners and landlords of HMOs

will have to demonstrate that their properties meet minimum standards - relating to fire safety, provision of amenities, energy efficiency and so on - as a condition of being granted a licence. Housing conditions in HMOs are widely recognised as being among the poorest and most dangerous in tile country. The Bill will save lives and will go a long way to helping the government meet its goat of eradicating fuel poverty."

The MP added: "The second part of the Bill puts in place measures to strengthen significantly local authorities' ability to meet their energy efficiency targets under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995. That Act required authorities to achieve 30% improvements by 2010 in the energy efficiency of the housing stock in their area. However, the latest figures show that most authorities are nowhere near on course to meet their targets. Des' Bill provides for the HECA target to be made a statutory duty, thereby giving authorities the resources and support that they have been crying out for to enable them to get the job done."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 238/01 Tuesday 27 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES BOOST TO NHS IN PRE BUDGET REPORT

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed the Chancellor's Pre Budget Report which promises an additional £1 billion pounds a year for the NHS. "It is a welcome boost for the NHS" says Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The global economy is slowing as a result of 11 September but we in Britain are better placed than most to weather the storm. The promises we made to put extra cash into the NHS and education will be honoured. And pensioners and working families will remain a top priority."

Because debt and debt interest payments are lower, an extra £1 billion will go to the NHS next year. Health spending in the coming year will now rise by 10 per cent in cash terms, 7 per cent in real terms.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, gave the Commons details of a further package of support for pensioners, including: a guaranteed minimum increase of at least £100 a year, every year, in the Basic State Pension; a new Pension Credit from 2003 giving 5.4 million pensioners as much as £1,000 more;

and the Winter Fuel Payment paid at £200 each year for this entire Parliament.

Interest rates are now the lowest for nearly 40 years. Mortgage rates are now the lowest since the 1950s. Inflation is the lowest since 1963. Debt has been cut from 44% of GDP in 1997 to 31% now and is the lowest of the G7 countries.

Note to Editors: For every pensioner, a guaranteed minimum increase in

more follows

the Basic State Pension of at least £100 for single pensioners, £160 for pensioner couples, each and every year. The Pension Credit from 2003 will give 5.4 million pensioners up to an additional £770 for single pensioners and up to £1,000 for pensioner couples. For the poorest pensioners, a Minimum Income Guarantee of £100 week. The Winter Fuel Payment guaranteed at £200 each year for this entire Parliament.

An extra £1 billion for the NHS next year, through lower debt and debt interest payments. Health spending in the coming year will now rise by 9.6% per cent in cash terms, 7 per cent in real terms.

A new Working Tax Credit from 2003 that will extend the principle of the Working Families Tax Credit to reward the work of people on low incomes whether or not they have children.

For the first time in three decades, each region of the world has slowed at one and the same time, and more sharply than before. No one country can insulate its economy from such a world slowdown - and in addition, no one can yet judge the full and final impact of the events of September 11th.

But because of decisions the Government has taken since 1997 - to cut debt and to make the Bank of England independent - the UK is now better placed, with low inflation and sound public finances, to sustain steady and stable growth.

That is why during this world slowdown our interest rates are now 4 per cent, in contrast to interest rates of 10 per cent - and for one whole year 15 per cent - during the Tory boom and bust of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Pre-Budget Report shows that:

• The UK is forecast to grow by 2% per cent this year ñ in line with the Budget forecast - the strongest economic growth in the G7.

• Interest rates are now the lowest for nearly 40 years.

• Mortgage rates are now the lowest since the 1950s.

• Inflation is the lowest since 1963.

The public finances are on a sustainable footing. Debt has been cut from 44% of GDP in 1997 to 31% now and is the lowest of the G7 countries and among the lowest in the EU.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 239/01 Tuesday 27 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

STAMP DUTY ABOLISHED IN 8 PENDLE WARDS

The Chancellor of the Exchequer today announced that Stamp Duty would be abolished on property transactions in 2,000 wards nationwide.

Gordon Brown was outlining his pre budget report to the Commons.

In Pendle, eight wards will benefit - Bradley, Whitefield, Waterside, Walverden, Southfield, Brierfield, Marsden and Vivary Bridge. In these areas, with effect from 30 November, stamp duty will no longer be payable on property sales up to £150,000.

Under the second stage, which is expected to start in 2002, the Government intends to raise the limit significantly or abolish stamp duty for all transactions in non-residential property within qualifying areas.

The Pendle MP commented: "This is just what is needed to get the property market moving again. It will encourage businesses to locate in qualifying areas and help to revive depressed property markets."

The stamp duty exemption is part of the Government's Urban White Paper fiscal package which also includes VAT reforms to encourage the conversion and renovation of existing residential property, tax relief to encourage the conversion of empty space over shops into flats and tax credits for cleaning up contaminated land.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

Immediate Release. No 244/01 Wednesday 28 November 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES BENEFITS UPRATING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news of the annual uprating of benefits announced in the Commons this afternoon by Work and Pensions Secretary, Alistair Darling.

Note to Editors: The main details are as follows: **For Pensioners.** The Basic State Pension remains the foundation of income in retirement. For single pensioners, it will rise by £3 from April 2002 (following the £5 rise this year) and by £4.80 for pensioner couples (on top of £8 this year).

Taking this year and next together, that means single pensioners have gained £4.55 more than inflation. From the year after next the Basic State Pension will rise by a minimum of 2.5% a year (the Official inflation target) or more if inflation is higher. That means Single pensioners will get at least £100 a year more from April 2003 and pensioner couples at least £160 a year.

Pensioner poverty will be tackled through the Minimum Income Guarantee. From April 2002, the MIG will be raised by 4.6%. That means that no single pensioner will need to live on less than £98.15 a week - that's up by £6 - or pensioner couple on less than £149.70 a week - up by £9.15.

The Government has raised the MIG by at least the rise in earnings in every year since it was introduced in 1999. The MIG will be raised in line with earnings for the rest of this Parliament.

The Government will ensure that pensioners who save for their retirement are rewarded for their thrift. The Pension Credit will be introduced from 2003. Any pensioner with income below around £135 or pensioner couple with an income below £200 will see their hard earned savings rewarded with extra money, not penalised as in the past.

Second, it will provide an additional top-up to reward savings pensioner, age 65 or over who have saved for their retirement. Pensioners with modest second pensions and savings will get more as a result of their thrift.

Third, the Government will abolish the rule which excludes pensioners with £12,000 or more in savings from any help and introduce a fairer system for taking into account income from savings,

more follows

MP WELCOMES BENEFITS UPRATING

Fourth, the weekly means test will be replaced with a much simpler assessment process. For those over 65 it will be done at the same time as a person claims his or her Basic State Pension and, assuming no substantial change in circumstances, only every 5 years thereafter.

Around half of all pensioner households stand to gain, Two thirds of the people gaining will be women - half of them over the age of 75. On average, pensioners will gain around £400 a year, with some getting up to £1,000 a year. 3 million better off pensioners who currently pay tax will also gain as income tax allowances are raised by more than inflation,

The Winter Fuel Payment will be paid at £200 to every household with somebody over 60 this year and every year for the rest of this Parliament.

For disabled people. The Government is helping severely disabled people to stay independent by changing the rules of the Independent Living Funds. ILFs help to finance care packages for severely disabled people together with local authorities. The Government is today announcing two major changes to the way they work to widen access.

From April 2002 the capital limit for disabled people applying to the ILF will be increased by more than £10,000 to £18,500, allowing them to qualify for support while keeping more of their savings. From April 2002 earnings will be completely disregarded in assessing eligibility for support from the

ILF. That means not only that disabled people will be able to take up (or stay at) work while still qualifying for ILF support but so too can their partners.

For parents and carers...The Government is recognising the work done by people who care for their disabled children and helping to tackle child poverty. From April 2002, the Disabled Child Premium in Income Support will increase to £35.50 - that's £5 over inflation. And they will get a further £5 over inflation from April 2003. Taken together with this year's above inflation rise, disabled children will be more than £17 better off over three years as a result of this measure alone.

These changes will be mirrored in the Working Families Tax Credit (and the new Child Tax Credit when it is introduced) so that carers in working families will also benefit. These changes will benefit around 80,000 children.

The Government is delivering more support for new mothers, recognising the value of their contribution to the community. The standard rate of Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance will go up from
£62.20 to £75 a week from April 2002, the largest increase in maternity benefit since 1958. This will help around 340,000 families a year. And it will rise further to £100 from April 1 2003 - that is a rise of 80% since 1997.

Sure Start Maternity Grants will rise to £500 from April 2000 - that's five times as much for mothers to pay for essential items on the birth of her child as the Maternity Payment it replaced in March 2000.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 245/01 Thursday 6 December 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

KEEP AEROSPACE FLYING says PENDLE MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling on the Government to support the beleaguered aerospace industry, plunged into crisis by the events in America of 11 September.

The MP told workers at a aerospace lobby of Parliament yesterday - organised by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions - that practical measures were needed to keep the industry going over the next twelve months. The lobby - which included workers from the RR plants at Barnoldswick - heard the MP say that the tragedy of 11th September should not be used by aerospace companies as an excuse “to re configure their operations” way beyond the response needed to reflect the change in the market.

Last night, in the Commons the MP tackled Europe Minister, Peter Hain, about the procurement of the Airbus A400M. “Military orders can and should take up the slack

when the commercial side is suffering so badly. The Government should bring forward Ministry of Defence orders and get our European partners signed up also."

The MP raised the issue with the Prime Minister on Wednesday. Prentice is to meet the Chief Executive of Rolls Royce on Tuesday of next week.

Note to Editors: The General Secretary of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, A Robson, wrote to the Pendle MP on 30 November as follows:

The tragic events which occurred in the USA - without minimising the impact to the American people who have our deepest sympathy - are and will

more follows

KEEP AEROSPACE FLYING says PENDLE MP

continue to have devastating consequences for the British Aerospace industry. It is more than just possible, parts of the industry will face terminal decline particularly in the supply chain.

Immediate further effects are that thousands of British workers have been and will be made redundant, as financial institutions retrench and airlines in the light of this defer orders. This cannot be allowed to continue.

The Aerospace Industry is vital to national security and is a major contributor to the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing side of the Aerospace Industry directly employs over 154,000 with many more thousands employed throughout the 'supply chain.

The 1999 turnover for the industry was £17.59 billion and accounts for 42% of the total EU Aerospace Industry and 13% of all major aerospace producing economies.

In 1999 the gross value added which is a broad indication of productivity, shows that the UK's value was £7.1 billion set aside to Frances' £6.2 billion and £4 billion for Germany.

The UK Aerospace exported £13.2 billion of goods. This is an illustration of the importance of the manufacturing aerospace industry to the country's well being, and this should remain so.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 246/01 Wednesday 12 December 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES PLANS TO GIVE COUNCILS MORE FREEDOM

Proposals, published this week, to give councils wide ranging powers to tackle local problems and exploit local opportunities have been welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice.

Speaking from Westminster as the details emerged, the MP said: "For too long Councils have been bound hand and foot by central government - unable to move without prior permission. I want to see go-ahead councils given the freedom to innovate and deliver excellent services with out having to look over their shoulder every minute to check it is OK with Whitehall."

Note to Editors: The White Paper seeks to redefine the relationship between central and local government to reflect the importance of local government as a tier of democratic government, and as a key part in the delivery of high quality public services. The proposals set out in the WP enhance the ability of local councils to make a real difference to people's lives both on national priorities like education, social services and crime or local priorities like graffiti and clean streets.

A clear framework for the delivery of high quality services: New comprehensive assessments for all councils ñ for the first time, councils will be classified as high-performing, striving, coasting and poor-performing; Information on how well a council has performed to be sent to all council tax payers with their council tax bill each year; Each local council to agree local Public Service Agreements (PSAs) setting out how they will deliver service improvements.

New powers and greater freedom for all to enable council leaders and front line staff to respond to meet their community needs. Reducing the number of plans and strategies that Government requires councils to produce;
Removing unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy including many requirements for councils to have Government consent before acting. Greater freedom for councils to invest; Making councils themselves responsible for deciding how much they can prudently borrow;

more follows

MP WELCOMES PLANS TO GIVE COUNCILS MORE FREEDOM

Keeping to a minimum the ring-fencing of Government grants to councils; Extra freedoms for the best councils, rewards for those who meet stretching targets, help for councils where they are struggling.

Tough action where councils are identified as failing, with little or no prospect of improvement. This could include: transferring functions to other providers. This could be another council, a not-for-profit company or the private sector. Giving stronger councils (or other public bodies) a role in running failing councils. In the case of financial mismanagement, appointing an administrator to restore solvency while ensuring the continuity of essential services.

The importance of local councils

The Government wants to see strong, vibrant, innovative and responsive local government delivering the quality of local leadership and public services that their communities need. Councils are run by people elected by the local community. That gives them a unique role and responsibility to respond to local needs and circumstances, and to provide the leadership that thriving communities need.

Councils value to their communities stands or falls by the quality of the leadership and services they deliver. People want good standards of education, safe communities, efficient transport systems and high quality care for the vulnerable in our society. They want clean streets, decent housing, good

leisure and cultural facilities, and well-planned neighbourhoods. They want control over how these are delivered, and they want someone looking after and speaking up for the interests of their communities.

People rightly expect a great deal from their council. To meet them, councils need constantly to seek new and more effective ways to deliver services and lead their communities. The proposals in this White Paper will help them to do so. We want all councils to aspire to the performance of the best, and will provide the resources, support, incentives and intervention necessary to achieve this objective.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 247/01 Wednesday 12 December 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP URGES ROLLS ROYCE TO WORK WITH LOCAL AEROSPACE PARTNERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged Rolls Royce to work closely with other local aerospace companies to help mitigate the effect of the collapse in airline orders for new planes. The company, which has two sites in Barnoldswick, has announced 295 redundancies - 225 works and 70 staff.

The MP meet Rolls Royce chiefs yesterday at the company's Buckingham Gate HQ. John Cheffins - who manages the civil aerospace side - said a decision on Ghyll Brow and whether to consolidate at Bankfield, would be made within three months.

Cheffins said the company aimed to "re-size the business" to take account of the changed marketplace. He said: "The chances of bringing people back within a year is zero."

Speaking after the meeting, the MP said: "This was another very sombre meeting lasting over one and a half hours. The company raised some issues about the Export Credits Guarantee scheme, support for research and development and defence procurement. These are issues I shall be taking up with the DTI secretary, Patricia Hewitt, when I meet her later today (Wednesday)."

At present, 46% of RR Research and Technology work is done outside the UK. The MP said: "I told John Cheffins there was no possibility of Government help with

research and technology without firm guarantees that the work would be done in the UK. The jobs need to be in Britain."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 248/01 Wednesday 12 December 2001
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR "CONVERSATION" OVER COMMUNITY COHESION REPORT INTO SUMMER DISTURBANCES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for a mature debate on the issues raised by the Ted Cantle report on Community Cohesion. The Cantle working group was set up following the disturbances over the summer in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: "No-one needs to strike positions on this. There are real issues that need to be addressed about how be build a socially inclusive society and that requires a dialogue - a conversation."

"I don't want to see groups marginalised, cut off in low paid jobs, in poor housing. We've got to talk to each other to chart a way forward."

Note to Editors: The Ministerial Group set up in the aftermath of the summer disorder in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley will be given a permanent remit to drive forward work on building community cohesion,
The inter-Ministerial Public Order and Community Cohesion (POCC) team was commissioned by Home Secretary David Blunkett, following the disturbances to report to him on how to minimise the risks of repeated disorders and build stronger cohesive communities.
Further action set out in the report includes:

Community Cohesion is made an explicit aim of Government, so that investment in schools, housing and neighbourhood renewal considers this goal; A debate is initiated at national and local level on the core values on which citizenship of modern, multi-racial, Britain is based; Community Cohesion action plans should be drawn up for Bradford, Oldham and Burnley by April 2001; Community Support Teams should be developed to support local leadership in places where their contribution is needed; and
The Regional Co-ordinator posts within Government Offices to remain to help build a longer-term approach to the capacity building that began with the community facilitators.

more follows

MP CALLS FOR "CONVERSATION" OVER COMMUNITY COHESION REPORT INTO SUMMER DISTURBANCES

The report of the Community Cohesion Review Team, chaired by Ted Cantle, was published yesterday.

Note to Editors 2: Statement from David Blunkett Calling for Honest and Open Debate on Citizenship and Community

"The reports published today raise profound issues for our society. Whilst the violence and social disorder we saw in our towns and cities was inexcusable, the reports show that behind the disturbances lie serious social problems. There is a large measure of agreement that in the areas affected, communities are fractured and polarised.

"Significant Government investment is going into the regeneration of these communities, to underpin equality of opportunity and hope for the future. But communities need social cohesion as well as social justice. Today's reports show that too many of our towns and cities lack any sense of civic identity or shared values. Young people, in particular, are alienated and disengaged from much of the society around them, including the leadership of their communities.

"These are not issues for Government alone. They demand a wide public debate on what citizenship and community belonging should mean in this country. Ted Cantle's report is clear that we can't tiptoe around these issues ñ an open national debate is crucial if we are to move forward and make progress.

"My starting point is the equal worth and dignity of everyone, whatever their background or circumstances.

"This means tackling the inequalities, like poverty and social injustice, that exclude people from participation in society. It means rooting out racism and discrimination wherever it exists. The Government has strengthened Race Relations legislation, putting the public sector at the heart of our efforts to secure race equality. We are also legislating to outlaw incitement to religious hatred.

"But it also means that people should have the wherewithal, such as the ability to speak English, to participate fully in society. This is not linguistic colonialism as my critics allege ñ it is about opportunity and inclusion.

"And just as we seek to defeat racism, so we must protect the rights and duties of all citizens, and confront practices and beliefs that hold them back, particularly women.

"This is not cultural conformity. There is no contradiction between retaining a distinct cultural identity and identifying with Britain. But our democracy must uphold fundamental rights and obligations to which all citizens and public authorities adhere. Citizenship means finding a common place for diverse cultures and beliefs, consistent with the core values we uphold.

more follows

MP CALLS FOR "CONVERSATION" OVER COMMUNITY COHESION REPORT INTO SUMMER DISTURBANCES

"These are not easy issues for our society to debate. They go to the heart of our beliefs and our identities. But unless we are prepared to debate them openly and honestly, we will not make progress.

"Nor can these shared values be imposed or community cohesion built in Whitehall. Local people need to take the lead on local problems because no one else has a greater stake in solving them. ...But today's reports show that we have failed to promote cohesive communities and common citizenship in the UK.

"This is partly for historical reasons. The UK has had a relatively weak sense of what political citizenship should entail. Our values of individual freedom, the protection of liberty and respect for difference, have not been accompanied by a strong, shared understanding of the civic realm.

"This has to change. It is vital that we develop a stronger understanding of what our collective citizenship means, and how we can build that shared commitment into our social and political institutions. We will keep the Ministerial group, and draw in other expertise, to oversee this work.

"We need therefore a wide public debate, with real engagement, about the values around which we can strive to build those communities, not least in the areas hit by last summer's disturbances.

"This is an opportunity to move into a new era in which we have the chance to join the commitment of all communities to the social agenda and shared values of a vibrant and strengthened civil society.

Further References

The Public Order and Community Cohesion Group report following the disturbances in Bradford Oldham and Burnley is available in the Race Equality and Diversity section of the Home Office Website at www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion is available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/reu/pocc.pdf

A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cantle is available at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/reu/community_cohesion.pdf

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 01/02 Tuesday 8 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

WHITEFIELD INQUIRY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has today stepped into the controversy over the future of houses in the Whitefield area of Nelson on the first day of a public inquiry into Pendle Council's plans to demolish around 160 homes.

The MP said: "We all know that Pendle faces major difficulties with the massive problems of unfit, empty and abandoned housing. Over one in five houses in East Lancashire is classified as such, an estimated 5,400 here in Pendle. The Whitefield area, which is just round the corner from my constituency office, has 98% of its properties built before 1919 and, in my view many of these houses are now past their

sell-by-date. However, we are now told this area - where many properties can be picked up for a song - has huge historic significance and this claim by English Heritage will be tested in the public inquiry."

He continued: "Pendle Council's proposals to demolish some properties and build 66 new, larger homes are done with the best of intentions. They are trying to tackle the issue of bad housing and are not out to destroy communities."

The MP has campaigned for years to bring the issue of sub-standard housing to the Government's attention and has succeeded in getting three housing ministers, Hilary Armstrong, Nick Raynsford and more recently Charles Falconer to come and see for themselves the extent of the problem.

Just before Christmas the MP also met with Malcolm Cooper, the Regional Director of English Heritage who are challenging the need for demolition. They told the MP they consider Whitefield to be a unique piece of architectural textile history and as such would want to see every effort made to retain the existing housing stock.
The MP said: "English Heritage will be presenting evidence at the inquiry and they have to prove not only that the area is unique but that they can underwrite the cost of regenerating the area."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471(constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 02/02 Wednesday 9 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NURSERY EDUCATION PLACES FOR 3 YEAR OLDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news that the Government is on track to meet its target for free early education places for three year olds. The Department for Education has announced details of £275 million of Nursery Education Grant funding to help create new places, with Lancashire Education Authority receiving funding of £7,371,336 for 6,052 free places to be funded for 2002-2003.

The MP said: “The government is well set to reach its target of providing access for two thirds of our nursery-age children with a free early education place by this March. And we are confident that all local authorities will reach universal provision by September 2004 - I think this is quite an achievement.”

He concluded: “In the mean time I’m speaking to County Hall to find out how many places we can expect in Pendle for the coming year.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471(constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 03/02 Wednesday 9 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

£20 MILLION FOR HIGH-TECH HEARING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed the news that the Department of Health is to invest £20 million to modernise hearing aid services this year. The investment will mean in addition to the 20 sites already involved in the project, at least a further 30 sites will be fitting digital hearing aids by the end of this year. On top of this, at least a further 15 sites will have the necessary training and equipment in place to fit digital hearing aids provided through NHS contract from 2003/04.

The MP said: “I have had a lot correspondence from people in Pendle who wanted to see the introduction of digital hearing aids by the NHS. It was great news therefore to have this announcement from the government. It means that almost a third of patients will be able to benefit from this cutting edge technology.”

Decisions on which sites should join the project will be announced in due course and the Department of Health will be closely with the RNID to plan and manage the extended project.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471(constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 04/02 Wednesday 9 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP KEEPS AEROSPACE AT TOP OF THE AGENDA

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is hosting a meeting in Westminster for the North West Aerospace Alliance to take place next month (February). The MP is keen to make sure that the problems for the aerospace industry don't get forgotten.

The MP said: "The problems for the aerospace industry arose after the dreadful events of 11 September 2001 with a collapse in orders and the consequential announcement of redundancies by Rolls Royce."

He continued: "It is hugely important we do all we can to get people flying again. The aerospace industry is going through a very rough patch but things will get better. The knock-on effect for the aerospace business has been devastating but we have to keep our nerve. We need to make sure the industry doesn't get rid of skilled workers they will, undoubtedly, need later."

A year ago the Government announced £250m in grant aid to Rolls Royce and at the time the MP told the then Trade and Industry Secretary, Stephen Byers, the cash injection should be tied to a UK jobs guarantee.

The MP said: "That announcement seems like a million light years away, so much has changed since then. But we must look to the future, the aerospace industry black hole is one that we can climb out of, if we all work together."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 006/02 Monday 14 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WARNS OF OVERSTRETCH IN ARMED FORCES

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today warned Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, that Britain's armed forces could become dangerously overstretched.

The MP told the Commons: "We now have our forces all over the world - in the Middle East, Bosnia and Kosovo, Sierra Leone and now Afghanistan and I am left wondering if we are asking them to do too much."

The MP added: "We should pull our weight but do we really want to become the global policeman?"

Defence Minister, Adam Ingram, told the MP: "The Government aims to commit personnel to operations for no longer than is necessary to achieve the military aim. In the Army, although there are variations between units, the average unit tour interval has improved with the latest assessment being around 28 months, the best figure for five years and above the Strategic Defence Review target of 24 months."

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "Today the Commons was told there is to be the first compulsory call up of army reservists since Suez - 140 military intelligence people. Are we going to see further call ups of other skills and trades that are in short supply."

"I fear our armed forces are very thinly stretched. We have people all over the place - in Bosnia, Kosovo, Gibraltar, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Georgia, Holland, Brunei, East Timor, Oman and Muscat, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Belize, the Falklands, Sierra Leone and a good few other places too."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 006/02 Tuesday 15 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BIDS TO SAFEGUARD DISUSED RAILWAY LINES WHICH COULD BE RE-OPENED

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed a review of disused railway lines by the Strategic Rail Authority to see whether they could be re-opened for trains or have other transport uses - such as cycle ways.

Today Transport Minister, John Spellar, told the MP: "The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) has instituted a review process for disposals of former British Rail non-operational land which was not transferred to Railtrack at privatisation. The process involves a property advisory group, which includes representatives of the Rail Passenger Council, the Rail Freight Group and Local Authorities, advising the SRA on potential future use of sites for rail and other integrated transport uses."

The Minister went on: "In this way sites with potential for future transoport use are identified while surplus sites can be sold with proceeds reinvested by the SRA in support of its objectives. Where disused lines are in other ownership the local planning authority may restrict development which may prevent future re-opening."

Speaking from Westminster, Prentice commented: "These disused track beds represent a hugely important national asset. Once they are dug up and built over, you can wave goodbye to the prospect of re-opening lines which may be needed in a few year's time."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 07/02 Wednesday 16 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

UNEMPLOYMENT IN PENDLE

The number of people out of work in Pendle in December and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance stood at 1,085 - up from 1,050 in November 2001. This represents an unemployment rate of 3.1%. There were 829 men and 256 women out of work. Nationally, the claimant count has risen and now stands at just over 963,500.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: "We still don't know what effect the job losses at Rolls Royce will have on the figures. Indications are that 295 jobs are to go - between 25% - 30% of the workforce - as the company slims down its operations following the attacks on America on 11 September. Jobs there will go from 31 March 2002."

He continued: "Inevitably the figures for unemployment locally are set to rise in the wake of 11 September. We've got to re-double our efforts to ensure that new jobs continue to come into the area."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 006/02 Tuesday 15 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE KNOCKS PEOPLE'S PEERS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, took a swipe at appointed peers this afternoon during Commons questions to the Leader of the House, Robin Cook.

Last year, the appointment of the so called people's peers caused a storm of controversy. The 15 strong list included knights and dames and professors - but, according to the Pendle MP, "no lollipop ladies". At the time he dubbed the list a sick joke.

At questions today, the MP asked Cook if he would invite the Chairman of the House of Lords Appointments Commission, Lord Stevenson, "to discuss with people's peers

the experience of their membership of the Lords with a view to informing its future recommendations".

The MP added: "If appointed peers are expected to make a contribution to the work of the House of Lords, is Dennis Stevenson setting a good example by only speaking twice in the two and a half years since he was ennobled in 1999?"

Speaking afterwards, Prentice said: "Robin listed the qualities of those who have been elevated to the peerage but the plain fact is, there are no hairdressers there."

Last year, Stevenson provoked outrage when he said ordinary people such as hairdressers could no "cut it" in the Lords".

The last time Lord Stevenson spoke in the Lords was on 22 November 1999. He said: "I look forward in the years to come to participating in vigorous exchanges...in the Chamber."

Contact: pager pager 07644 005297 or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 006/02 Tuesday 15 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WARNS OF "ASSET STRIPPING" DANGER IN NHS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, quizzed Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, in the Commons this afternoon about controversial Government plans to allow three star NHS Hospital Trusts to sell off their assets without needing the consent of Ministers.

Milburn told the Commons that top performing NHS trusts would be able to run poorly performing ones and they would be able to keep the proceeds from the sale of unwanted assets.

Prentice told the Minister the plan was an invitation to asset strip - especially in the trusts in the South East and in London where land values were high.

After the exchange, the MP said: "This is a question of giving more to those who already have most. Where there are unwanted assets, by all means these should be disposed of but the cash should go back into the NHS pot. In North East Lancashire, land values are a fraction of those in other parts of the country."

"Why should the purchase of additional expensive MRI scanners, for example, depend on whether NHS assets can be sold off locally?"

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 010/02 Thursday 17 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR MORE SUPPORT TO KEEP ROLLS ROYCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN UK

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged the Government to give more support to Rolls Royce to help retain the company's research and development here in the UK.

In the aftermath of September 11, RR announced major redundancies across the UK. One third of the workforce at its plants in Barnoldswick are set to lose their jobs.

In the Commons this morning, the MP told Industry Minister, Alan Johnson, that 46% of RR research and development was now done outside the UK. The MP called on the UK Government to match the commitment shown by other countries to their aerospace industries.

The MP wanted Government launch aid tied to a commitment to retain skilled jobs in Britain.

Speaking after the exchange the MP said: "The Minister mentioned the help the industry had received and I acknowledge that. But aerospace is the goose that lays the golden egg and at the moment it needs extra care and attention."

Last February, the Government announced it was to give the company £250m in grant aid to help develop the hugely successful Trent series of engines.

Note to Editors: RR spends about £600 million a year in research and development. Last February, the company said the repayable launch investment would safeguard more than 7,000 jobs in the UK.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 011/02 Thursday 24 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

BOBBIES BACK ON THE BEAT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news that we will see more police on the streets in Barnoldswick and Earby. The new policing structure includes the appointment of four Community Beat Officers to cover Barnoldswick and Earby and will come into effect in April.

The MP, who lives in Barnoldswick, said: "This is something that the people in West Craven have been asking for, there is a lot of reassurance felt by just seeing an officer on the streets. These areas have not, so far, had their own Community Beat Officers and this is what the public want."

Also included in the new structure is the retention of Barnoldswick and Earby's dedicated mobile patrol with 24 hour cover. Lancashire Constabulary came up with the new structure following surveys and consultation of the communities involved and it was clear from the responses that a large proportion of people were keen to see police on the beat.

The MP concluded: "The police will be monitoring the changes to ensure this is a change for the better and I for one am sure this is a move in the right direction. It will certainly be welcomed by the local communities."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 012/02 Wednesday 23 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP MEETS CHIEF OF EAST LANCS HEALTH AUTHORITY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is meeting David Peat, Chief Executive of the East Lancs Health Authority this Friday 25 January at Mr Peat's office in Nelson.

The meeting includes other MPs from East Lancashire and is to up-date the members on the new health structures. The Secretary of State for Health is in the process of consulting on the creation of a Strategic Health Authority for Cumbria and Lancashire and along with the establishment of Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale Primary Care Trust will replace East Lancashire Health Authority and other similar bodies. The changes will come into effect on 1 April 2002.

The Pendle MP said: "We don't want change for changes sake. These new structures have to be for the right reasons - a better standard of health care for everyone."

The PCT will be responsible for health care for the community by direct provision of primary and community services and commissioning secondary and tertiary services, health needs and improvement.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 013/02 Wednesday 30 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LABOUR DELIVERS!

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news of improved maternity services at Burnley General Hospital. The £94,000 the hospital has received is part of the Government's Maternity Modernisation Fund and will be used to improve the facilities in the maternity ward.

The MP said: "I am delighted to see more money going into the maternity service. Giving birth, I am told, is a pretty traumatic experience and any improvements to facilities that make the place a bit more homely must be welcomed."

The work on the improvements will begin in April this year and include:

• Creation of overnight facilities for fathers on the Antenatal and Postnatal wards.

• Provision of a counselling room/quiet room

• Purchase of a blood gas analyser to assist in the decision to perform Caesarian Sections.

The MP concluded: "Welfare of mother and baby is crucial at the time of birth and any improvements to the facilities is good news."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 014/02 Wednesday 14 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NO PLANS TO LICENSE FARMERS says MP

The Government confirmed yesterday that it has no plans to force farmers to have a licence before they can work the land or tend livestock. There has been speculation in the farming press and elsewhere that a system of licences for livestock and arable farmers was on the cards.

At Environment and Rural Affairs questions in the Commons yesterday, Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, quizzed Agriculture Minister, Margaret Beckett, who was outlining to MPs the Curry Commission's report on the future of farming and food.

Prentice told MPs: "There are some outside the House who think the Government has a secret agenda. We've had BSE, salmonella, E-coli, listeria and foot and mouth. Has the Government any plans now or in the future to license all farmers?"

The Minister replied: "No, we do not have such plans. But my friend identifies an issue that concerned the Commission. It said that we should take steps to ensure that high standards are met in terms of food safety and environmental considerations. It suggests that while production subsidies are part of the structure of the CAP and continue to be paid - it would wish to see them phased out - there should be criteria that relate to standards, including food safety standards."

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "No-one wants to see farmers crushed by paperwork but food safety is a critically important issue. People want safe and wholesome food."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 015/02 Thursday 31 January 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE GPs GET READY TO HANG UP THEIR STETHOSCOPES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for renewed efforts to be made to attract young doctors into the Pendle area to fill the gaps caused by retiring GPs.

Earlier this week, Health Minister, John Hutton, told the MP: "During 2002/3, 14 general practitioners in the East Lancashire Health Authority area are expected to retire. A further 8 GPs are due to retire during 2003/2004."

The Minister added: "18 GPs currently within the Pendle Primary Care Group are aged over 55."

"East Lancashire Health Authority are pursuing a number of initiatives both in the long and short term to help address the problems in recruiting and retaining GPs."

The Pendle MP commented: "I have had discussions with the chair and chief executive of the new Pendle Primary Care Trust which gets up and running in April to see what more can be done to get young doctors to move into the area. Pendle has outstanding countryside on its doorsteps and offers a high quality of life."

"In fact, it's just what the doctor ordered."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 016/02 Tuesday 5 February 2002

PENDLE MP BACKS RETURN OF MARBLES TO ATHENS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing a move in the Commons today to return the Parthenon Marbles - known also as the Elgin Marbles - to Athens in time for the 2004 Olympics.

The Pendle MP is sponsoring a Bill brought in by Knowsley South MP, Eddie O'Hara, which will clarify the roles of the Government and the trustees of the British Museum, which has the Marbles. The Bill seeks to overcome the argument put forward by the Director of the British Museum that the Trustees are prevented by law from returning the Parthenon sculptures to Greece.

Prentice commented: "This is not a green light to empty our museums of their treasures. These sculptures are unique and belong in Athens, close to the Parthenon from which they were removed by Lord Elgin all those years ago."

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP supported the following Early Day Motion tabled by Eddie O'Hara MP on 31 October 2001: That this House is aware that the Parthenon Marbles, most of which are included in the Elgin Marbles collection in the British Museum, are integral architectural features of the Parthenon, itself a UNESCO world heritage site; notes with interest that the Greek Government has commissioned a new Acropolis Museum at a cost of £29m to be situated at the foot of the Acropolis and including a glass gallery facing the Parthenon and specifically intended to house the Parthenon Marbles; understands that this gallery will remain empty as long as the Parthenon Marbles are not available for display in it; is concerned that this will bring great discredit to the British Government and the British Museum in the eyes of the estimated three million visitors per annum to the Acropolis Museum from around the world; recognises that this location is unique as the only one in which it will be possible to view the Parthenon and its sculptures together in one experience; and calls upon the Government immediately to enter into discussions with the Greek Government with the purpose of returning the Parthenon Marbles to Athens for display in their gallery in the Acropolis Museum when it is opened at the time of the Athens Olympics in 2004.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 017/02 Monday 11 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE CALLS FOR COMMONS DEBATE ON CARE HOMES CRISIS IN LANCASHIRE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has asked the Speaker of the House of Commons for a special debate on the crisis in residential care in Lancashire.

The MP, whose Pendle constituency has five residential homes for the elderly run by the County Council, is working closely with other Lancashire MPs who share his deep concern about the issue.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "There are many ways of providing care and support for the elderly - from sheltered housing and care at home with proper support through to residential care. Clearly, there is a debate to be had about how we

do it and how we pay for it. But, underpinning everything, must be our concern for what is best for the elderly people themselves."

The MP continued: "However, such a discussion is quite impossible in the current circumstances where a sword of Damocles is hanging over 35 homes and hundreds of elderly people."

"I have always believed councils should provide services directly to the public - if that is what they want to do - and not simply contract out everything to other providers. In my view, caring for the elderly falls squarely within the responsibilities of a caring council."

"I shall be discussing the whole thing with the County Council."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 018/02 Tuesday 5 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP VOICES DEEP CONCERN ABOUT COUNTY COUNCIL'S PLANS FOR RESIDENTIAL HOMES

Proposals by Lancashire County Council to cut the number of residential homes for the elderly from 48 to 13 have "generated tremendous anxiety" says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The County Council has embarked on a consultation exercise to sound out opinion with a final decision pencilled in for July.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Many elderly people and their relatives must have been shattered by this announcement and with all the uncertainty and I will want to examine in great detail the proposals and their supposed justification. The Council says the move will save £14.5m and that this money is needed to bring the remaining homes up to the new standards laid down by the Government."

The MP continued: "All other things being equal, I want to see elderly people properly supported and living in the community. In Denmark, for example, there is no institutional care for elderly people at all. Those who need help are supported in sheltered housing with round the clock care. And that costs money."

"Here in Britain, we have a different set up and we can't simply close residential homes without considering the consequences for the individual residents and the possible knock on effects throughout the system. At a time when the Government is putting more money into the NHS, it would be crazy to have very elderly people bed blocking wards because there is nowhere else for them to go."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 018/02 Tuesday 5 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES TO MOVE TO HELP PEOPLE WITH MS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has hailed a new scheme announced by the Department of Health yesterday which will allow people with MS to get beta interferon and other disease modifying drugs on the NHS if their neurologist believes the drugs will help them.

The MP chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on MS and is President of the Burnley and Pendle MS Group.

Last December, the MP opened a new resource centre for people with MS at Holmefield House in Barrowford.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "This has been a long running saga which has dragged on for far too long. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) raised doubts about the effectiveness of these expensive drugs for treating some forms of MS. Now, the Government has cleared the way for neurologists to prescribe the drugs if they think they will do some good."

Under the scheme, patients' progress will be closely monitored. In a ground breaking move, the price of a drug to the NHS will be reduced if it fails to meet outcome targets agreed with the manufacturer. Monitoring is expected to continue over 10 years.

MS Society acting chief executive, Ken Walker, said, "These are the only drugs which can affect the progress of this devastating disease. The Department's scheme builds on a proposal we put to the Secretary of State last year, after it became clear the National Institute for Clinical Excellence was going to recommend people should be denied them."

“The Department is to be congratulated on acting imaginatively to

more follows

MP WELCOMES TO MOVE TO HELP PEOPLE WITH MS

end the nightmare which started with the post-code lottery and continued through two and a half years of NICE incompetence and intransigence, during which many people have become too
disabled to qualify for the drugs.”

"We welcome the Department's clear direction that health authorities and NHS Trusts are expected to fund all those eligible to receive treatment, under the same obligation they would have had if NICE had given positive guidance.”

"The Society will work closely with the NHS, the Association of British Neurologists and MS specialist nurses to carry the scheme forward as quickly as possible. This will link into our on-going work with the NHS to increase the number of MS nurses through partnership funding," he said.

The MS Society has set up a special information line for enquiries about the Department of Health scheme on 020 8438 0862. It is open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 020/02 Tuesday 5 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

“BACK THE POST OFFICE” MP TELLS BLAIR

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging the Government to back the Post Office against moves by the new postal services regulator to force the pace of competition, allowing private sector companies to pick up and deliver all mail.

The MP, who is backing a Commons motion, said: “The Post Office is a national institution and if it is broken up we won’t be able to put it back together again. The

Government is the sole shareholder in the Post Office so the buck really does stop at the Prime Minister's desk whatever the post regulator says."

"The Post Office - or Consignia as it is has astonishingly been rebranded - has to keep up with the times. But its nationwide delivery obligation and the presence of uniformed postmen and women on every street in Britain is an asset we have to keep and protect. The Post Office must not become another Railtrack."

Note to Editors: The Commons motion reads: That this House is concerned that Postcomm's recent proposals for postal competition will threaten the provision of a universal postal service; recalls that the primary responsibility of the postal regulator as set out in the Postal Services Act 2000 is to exercise its functions to ensure the provision of that universal postal service; is further concerned that Postcomm's obsession with an accelerated opening of the postal market to private sector exploitation to a much greater level and to a degree that is far in advance of that called for in the relevant European directive is driven by ideology regardless of the damage that will result to the universal postal service; and calls on the Government to reject the Postcomm proposals and support the management and workforce of Consignia in a balanced transition to new working arrangements that will allow Consignia to compete in a market opened up in line with the European directives while maintaining the universal postal service based on a UK-wide tariff for all households.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 021/02 Monday 11 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP URGES MORE SPEED TO GET THE MILITARY VERSION OF THE AIRBUS FLYING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called on the Government to speed up procurement of the A400M - the military version of the successful Airbus. He told MPs that, under the current timetable, the RAF would have to wait "half a generation" to get all the planes it needs.

The MP quizzed Defence Minister, Lewis Moonie, saying the RAF was due to receive the first 7 aircraft by 2010 and the full complement of 25 by 2014 - "half a generation away". The MP said: "In the North West we need this order to fill the gap when orders for commercial planes have been nose-diving."

The Minister spoke of the difficulties of rearranging procurement and production schedules.

Speaking afterwards, Prentice said: “I know there are difficulties with the Germans who are still making up their minds about the number of planes they need but I am hopeful this can be sorted out. But what I find inexplicable is the enormous length of time it seems to take to get this sort of plane airborne. After all, it is simply the military version of a plane that we are all familiar with.”

The MP, who takes a close interest in aerospace issues, is hosting a meeting at Westminster between MPs, Ministers and members of the North West Aerospace Alliance on Tuesday 26 February.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 022/02 Tuesday 12 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP CALLS FOR GREATER PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF PRIME MINISTER’S DECISIONS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for greater Parliamentary scrutiny of the Prime Minister’s decisions.

At question time in the House of Commons Prentice told the Leader of the House, Robin Cook, that the Prime Minister’s “very considerable powers” derive from the Royal Prerogative and that he should be more answerable to Parliament.

He told Cook: “The Public Administration Select Committee has invited the Prime Minister to appear before it but he has refused saying it would create a precedent. Regardless of whether it does, can’t my friend (Cook) intercede and encourage him to do so?”

Cook told the MP the PM already answers at Prime Minister’s Questions for half an hour every week and the setting aside of precedent was unlikely.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: “I was disappointed by Robin’s answer. A thousand important decisions are made by the PM and other Ministers every week of the year and these are not subject to Parliamentary scrutiny when they should be.”

“The Prime Minister is responsible for the Civil Service. The remit of the Public Administration Committee, on which I serve, extends to the Civil Service yet, bizarrely, we cannot quiz the PM about it. Important issues are coming up - from the

long awaited Civil Service Bill, which will gave something to say about special advisers, to the appointment of the new Cabinet Secretary."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 023/02 Tuesday 12 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TOLD CASH MAY BE AVAILABLE TO FUND FEASIBILITY STUDY INTO RE-OPENING RAILWAY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has been told by Transport Minister, John Spellar, that cash may be available to investigate the feasibility of re-opening the old Colne to Skipton railway which closed a generation ago.

The MP quizzed Spellar after speaking to a packed public meeting at the Municipal Hall in Colne earlier this month where calls were made for the line to be re-opened.

Prentice asked the Minister if he would ask the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) to commission a study on the feasibility and benefits of re-opening the old line.

The Minister said: "The SRA has no current plans to consider the possibility of re-opening this line. The relevant local authority could take forward such a study if they saw benefit in doing so. If funding for such a study were required it might be available through the SRA's Rail Passenger Partnership scheme, which has been extended to include the possibility of funding feasibility work."

The MP said: "Opinion is divided in Pendle. And all the local authorities want a new road to run along the track bed. But I think it's time for some lateral thinking on this issue."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 025/02 Thursday 14 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

GOVERNMENT UNDER PRESSURE ON LORDS REFORM

A unanimous report from the cross party Commons Public Administration Select Committee calling for a majority elected second chamber has increased pressure on Ministers to come forward with credible proposals for Lords reform.

Last weekend the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, told the Independent on Sunday it was “20% or nothing” so far as the elected element was concerned. Prescott’s statement concerned many Labour MPs - such as Pendle MP Gordon Prentice - who feel Labour has been comprehensively outflanked by the Conservatives and Lib Dems on the issue.

Committee member, Gordon Prentice, quizzed the Leader of the House, Robin Cook, at Business Questions this afternoon urging the Government to stick with convention and published its response to the report within two months.

The Pendle MP told Cook the Committee had done its work in little over a month and the Government did not require “ a lengthy period of reflection” before deciding what to do. Cook conceded that he would indeed respond within two months.

Speaking after the exchange, Prentice said: “The majority preference of the Committee would have been for a wholly elected and much smaller second chamber (see para 3) but we recognised this would have been totally unacceptable to the Government.”

“I have put my name to a unanimous report which keeps the pressure on. It is as plain as a pikestaff that the Government’s proposals have no credible support from any quarter.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

For Immediate Release. No 026/02 Wednesday 13 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

EXPLOSION OF MILLIONAIRES UNDER NEW LABOUR

The number of millionaires in the UK has exploded under the Blair Government.

In 1999 - the last year for which figures are available - there were 180,000 millionaires compared with a mere 80,000 in 1995 under the Tories.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, extracted the shock statistics from Treasury Minister, Dawn Primarolo. She told the MP the number of millionaires had risen steadily during the nineties from 80,000 in 1995 to 100,000 in 1996 to 140,000 in 1997.

In 1998 the numbers rose inexorably to 160,000 and up to 180,000 in 1999.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The existence of the National Lottery alone cannot explain these figures. There is now a huge number of very wealthy people."

"My own Pendle constituency and elsewhere in East Lancashire are low pay blackspots with, I suspect, very few millionaires. The gulf between the rich and poor in Britain has widened and is widening and this should concern us all."

Note to Editors: The figures are based on marketable wealth and include all assets but exclude occupational and state pension rights.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 027/02 Wednesday 13 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE GETS COMMONS DEBATE ON RESIDENTIAL CARE IN LANCASHIRE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has been given a special Commons debate on the County Council's controversial plans for residential care homes across Lancashire. The debate takes place on Tuesday 26 February.

The Pendle MP will be leading the debate with contributions following from other Lancashire MPs.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “Earlier today here at Westminster I had a useful meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the County Council. Many of my colleagues from other Lancashire constituencies were there also. There was a frank and honest exchange of views which cleared away the smoke and we now know where we stand.”

“I expressed deep disquiet about the proposals which came like a bolt from the blue.”

“We need to rewind the tape and consider what is best for the elderly people in our residential homes. They are, and must remain, our top priority.”

“We shall be meeting County Council leaders again shortly.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 027/02 Wednesday 20 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CONDEMNS BARBARIC SPORT

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has again condemned the running of The Waterloo Cup which takes place next week, starting Tuesday 26 February at Altcar, Merseyside. The hare coursing event involves two dogs competing in a test of speed and agility in pursuit of a live hare.

The MP has long been a strong advocate for banning the event along with other forms of hunting with dogs.

The MP said, “What sort of a person would want to watch animals suffer in this way. I find it astounding. The terrified hares are made to run for their lives to provide ‘entertainment’. In this day and age it can only be seen as barbaric.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 028/02 Wednesday 20 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

DOMESTIC BURGLARY FIGURES DOWN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the publication of the Draft Safety Strategy 2002/2005 published this week by Pendle Community Safety Partnership (PCSP). The partnership brings together the local council, police and other agencies to try to develop safer neighbourhoods and reduce the level and fear of crime in Pendle.
The MP said: "We don't want pass the parcel between the various agencies responsible for keeping our neighbourhoods safe and free from crime."

The main issues identified within the strategy are:
• Domestic Burglary
• Drugs and Alcohol Misuse
• Juvenile Nuisance
• Road Safety
• Vehicle Crime
• Violence and Harassment (Domestic violence, Racial harassment and violent crime).

The MP said: "The aim of this strategy is for all individuals to be able to work and live in a safe environment and local agencies and the community must work together to improve community safety."

The successes of 'A Safer Pendle' (1999-2002) include the introduction of CCTV in Nelson town centre and 'help points' available throughout the town centre. Domestic burglary was down from 3.1 per hundred households to 2.37 per hundred in 2001. The police have re-launched the neighbourhood watch scheme and the 'Alley-gates' scheme is currently in progress.

The MP concluded: “The achievements of the last strategy are a good start and these need to be built on and the new strategy bring improvements to the quality of life in Pendle.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 029/02 Wednesday 20 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

INDUSTRY SUMMIT AT WESTMINSTER

Local MP is hosting an aerospace industry summit next Tuesday 26 February 2002 at the House of Commons. The event will include top brass from the North West Aerospace Alliance (NWAA) including the Chair, Denis Mendoros and also leading policy makers including Defence Minister, Dr Lewis Moonie.

The MP said “The aerospace industry is critically important to this area not least as one of its major sources of employment. September 11 has knocked the industry off course - it had been doing well until then. This meeting will be a great opportunity to discuss ways and means of getting back on track.”

The NWAA represents over 200 companies engaged in aerospace manufacturing and the North West of England is the largest single centre of aerospace production in the UK.

The MP added: “People are going to start flying again and reports today of Virgin Atlantic ordering 10 air-bus jets and 50 Rolls Royce engines in a deal worth £1.5 billion is very encouraging.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 030/02 Wednesday 20 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP VISITS CARE HOMES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is visiting the five homes in his Pendle constituency for the elderly run by Lancashire County Council. The MP is talking to the care home managers to find out for himself the improvements that need to made to bring them in line with the new Care Standards set by the Government. The visits come following the huge controversy over the announcement by the County Council that a number of homes face closure.

The MP said: “This should not and must not be about money, it should be about what is best for our elderly.”

He continued: “As much as many of us would want to we can’t turn back the clock and pretend that the last 2-3 weeks haven’t happened. The announcement that potentially 35 homes face closure has caused tremendous anxiety for hundreds of residents and their families.”

The MP has secured a special debate at the House of Commons on the crisis in residential care in Lancashire. The debate will take place next Tuesday 26 February where the MP and other colleagues in Lancashire who share his deep concerns will raise the issue with the Minister.

The MP said: “We simply can’t close residential homes without considering the consequences for the individual residents and the possible knock-on effects throughout the system and I will be voicing these concerns at Westminster next week.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 031/02 Wednesday 20 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES IMPROVEMENTS IN LOCAL HEALTH CARE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed figures published today showing a clear improvement in the standard of health care offered to Pendle people by local hospitals. The figures, published by the Department of Health, show that Burnley Health Care Trust delivered on 5 out of 6 key targets but need to improve its performance in respect of operations cancelled on the day. The targets cover:

1. Numbers waiting for inpatient appointment
2. Patients waiting more than 18 months
3. Patients waiting on trolleys more than 12 hours
4. Operations cancelled on the day
5. Hospital cleanliness
6. Deaths in hospital within 30 days of surgery

The MP said: "The improvements in health care at both Burnley and Airedale hospitals are greatly encouraging but as we all know there is still room for improvement. The people in the health service do a tremendous job, often in very difficult circumstances, and they should be congratulated for the better standards shown by these figures."

The statistics show that compared with some parts of the country, trolley waits in East Lancashire rarely occur. In Airedale there are no trolley waits of more than 4 hours for any patients, in Burnley it is 0.5% of patients.

The Pendle MP pointed to significant local successes for East Lancashire including a 7.6% reduction in deaths from circulatory disease, a 9.3% reduction in the rate of suicide, a reduction by 9.21% in the rate of teenage pregnancies and 3.8% fewer deaths from cancer.

more follows.....

MP WELCOMES IMPROVEMENTS IN LOCAL HEALTH CARE

He added: “This is good news and very encouraging. But tragically the number of GPs is down by 4.3% and with the figure set to fall further as many of our local doctors reach retirement age we have all work together to seriously look into ways of attracting new GPs to the area.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 032/02 Friday 22 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP ON BBC NORTHWESTMINSTER

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be appearing on the BBC 2 political programme NorthWestminster this Sunday 24 February 2002 at 1.00pm. He will be discussing the controversial proposals to close 35 of the homes for the elderly run by Lancashire County Council.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 033/02 Thursday 28 February 2002

www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP CALLS FOR CLAMPDOWN ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling for the Government to introduce stronger penalties to help combat the illegal wildlife trade in the UK. The MP, who has long supported wildlife conservation, has made this move following publication of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) report 'Traded towards extinction' which uncovers the flourishing illegal wildlife trade in Britain.

The MP said: "The figures are staggering. Over one million illegal wildlife items were seized by Customs and Excise during the five year period studied and this is just the tip of the iceberg of illegal wildlife trade in the UK."

Even some of the most commonly recognised endangered species still make their way to this country. On average HM Customs seizes items of elephant ivory or skin and tiger products every day."

Other confiscated species include orchids, cacti, shells, seahorses , butterflies and rhino products.

The MP continued: "Incredibly, these people have even tried to smuggle in a live cheetah! Clearly, wildlife criminals see the UK as a soft touch and it's time the Government acted to change this."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 034/02 Thursday 28 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP SUPPORTS 'GREENER' CARS!

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news of the growing numbers of cars that are converted to run on Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LGP) and Natural Gas vehicles. The MP is a great enthusiast of 'green' policies and has long campaigned for a healthier environment.

The MP said: "Motorists are converting to cleaner fuels at an increasing rate and there are now estimated to be around 50,000 LPG cars in this country. In Pendle there are a growing number of petrol stations supplying this fuel and the easier it is for motorists to fill up there tanks the more people are likely to convert in the future"

The number of conversions is expected to increase by about 25,000 over the next year, prompted by the Government grants available, and the fact that low-cost LPG fuel is now available in all areas of the country.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 035/02 Thursday 28 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LANCS POLICE RADIO SYSTEM GOES NATIONWIDE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has quizzed Ministers on the safety of the Tetra communications system to be introduced in all police forces by 2004. This new digital police radio system, known as Airwave, will replace the current analogue police radios which have long been seen as insecure and unsatisfactory.

The MP has raised concerns in the past over the safety aspects of the new system, which was piloted in Lancashire. He said "We have seen great debate over potential health hazards in prolonged use of mobile phones and these new radios use a similar waveband. Scientific opinion is still divided on the long-term health effects on those who use it and whilst the research goes on the guidelines must be clear on its use."

He said: “But there are also some concerns over the operational use of the Airwave system. It is said that the radios might interfere with life-saving hospital equipment or cause false readings on breathalysers and disrupt speed cameras.”

“There is no doubt that all concerned want to see the Airwave system introduced because of the huge potential benefits it offers but the blips in the system should be ironed out just as soon as possible.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 036/02 Thursday 28 February 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF CARE HOME PROPOSALS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has called for Lancashire County Council to withdraw its controversial proposals to close 35 residential homes for the elderly in a complete review of the whole system.

In a debate in the House of Commons this Tuesday the MP told colleagues the proposals has caused ‘tremendous anxiety for the many elderly people in my constituency. Action groups have sprung up around the county. On Friday my constituency Labour party carried a resolution to fight the proposals.”

“The sheer scale of the proposal meant it struck as a shell burst. Residential care homes have been closed before, but the county council proposes reducing the number of homes in the county from 48 to 13.”

The MP continued: “People are angry about a consultation exercise that they perceive to be bogus. The county council has presented one option, not a series of alternatives. When people ask what the alternative is to the closure of residential homes, the county council promises consultation with other providers, but there is nothing substantial for people to get a grip on.”

The Pendle MP, who was supported by other Lancashire MP's, concluded: "The county council must withdraw the proposals. The sword of Damocles hangs over the homes, their residents and the wider community. The county council should start talking to the other providers in the private and voluntary sectors, and propose a plan for care for the elderly in Lancashire."

In response to the debate the Minister, Jacqui Smith, said: "The Government have issued statutory guidance to the National Care Standards Commission to ensure that the application of new standards does not lead to the closure of good quality homes."

more follows.....

MP CALLS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF CARE HOME PROPOSALS

"Care home representatives have welcomed the guidance. Some people have raised questions about the public statements made by Lancashire county council about the cost of bringing its in-house provision up to the level of the new care standards. I understand that the publicly stated figure of £14 million is inaccurate and that the real one is nearer to £4 million. Any higher sum would include expenditure on routine maintenance."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 037/02 Tuesday 12 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SAYS CUT POLLUTION AND SAVE POUNDS

Changes coming in on 6 April 2002 will mean big savings for people driving environmentally friendly cars and the reforms are welcomed by local MP, Gordon Prentice. By doing away with the old discounts for driving more business miles and

driving older cars, the Government has created financial incentives to reduce pollution. Having already reformed vehicle excise duty, the changes to the company car tax system mean that tax paid in both cases will be based on the car's carbon emissions.

The MP said: "Global warming is a threat to us all and will not just go away. As a result of these changes in tax, motorists who drive cleaner cars could pay thousands of pounds less tax than motorists who don't. This is an important way of rewarding and encouraging people to choose cleaner vehicles."

Early indications are that the new company car tax system is already encouraging a move to smaller and cleaner cars.

The MP continued: "Over the years, this will have a positive effect on all cars on our roads as these new company cars are sold on into the private car market. This will help to reduce pollution, something we should all be happy about."

Note to editor: A standard rate taxpayer travelling between 2,500 and 18,000 miles per year will pay £200 less tax than under the old system in a small car with low emissions. In a larger car with moderate emissions a higher rate taxpayer travelling between 2,500 and 18,000 miles per year will pay £345 less tax than previously. In a large car with higher level of emissions a higher rate of taxpayer will pay £214 more in tax if they travel up to 18,000 and if over that mileage means £1,285 more tax.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 038/02 Tuesday 12 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

NELSON CHOIRS SINGING AT HIGHEST LEVEL

Two choirs from Pendle have entered Sainsbury's national Choir of the Year competition. Nelson Civic Primary Choir and Nelson Civic Youth Choir are two of

over 300 choirs who have entered and will be auditioning in Manchester on 4 May competing for a place in the semi-finals.

The MP said: “I had the great pleasure in attending a concert given by these choirs a couple of years ago and I can vouch for a wonderful standard of singing. They will, of course, face great competition from choirs all over the country. But after hearing for myself how good they are, I know they must be in with a great chance of doing very well. Good luck!.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 039/02 Tuesday 12 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

FOULRIDGE WASTE WATER IMPROVEMENTS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news of improvements to Foulridge Waste Water Treatment Works. The work is part of a multi-million pound Towncare investment programme to improve services to Yorkshire Water customers.

The MP said: “The treatment plant at Foulridge has long been due for improvements and I am glad to see it now underway.”

The work will involve replacing the existing inlet works with new screens and a grit remocal facility. Two new tanks will be constructed and site security improved. The work began in mid-January and will take approximately 6 monthes to complete.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 040/02 Wednesday 15 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MPs LINE UP TO BACK HUNTING BAN NOW

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is urging the Government to outlaw hunting with dogs this year - using the Parliament Act to force through the Hunting Bill which was carried overwhelmingly by the Commons in the last session of Parliament.

The Parliament Act allows a Bill to be put on the statute book - despite opposition from the Lords - if it has been passed by the Commons in two consecutive sessions of Parliament.

The MP's amendment, which will appear on the House of Commons order paper on Monday(18 March), call on the Government to reintroduced the Hunting Bill "forthwith". The amendment has the support of former Cabinet Minister, Chris Smith, former PLP chair, Clive Soley, as well as members of Labour's Parliamentary Committee. Mike O'Brien, the former Minister who took the Bill through the Commons in the last session is also backing the amendment. The Conservatives' Ann Widdecombe is backing the move too.

Speaking from Westminster earlier today, the Pendle MP said: "We don't need these ridiculous indicative votes on Monday. We all know where we stand. We don't need a new Bill from the Government. We want the old one brought back. The whole thing is descending into farce."

Note to Editors: The banning option reads (with the amendment in italics) That this House considers that the hunting of wild mammals with dogs should be prohibited in accordance with provision similar to Schedule 3 to the Hunting Bill as introduced in the Commons last session [Bill 2] *and that the Hunting Bill as sent to the Lords in the last session of Parliament should be reintroduced forthwith.*

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 041/02 Tuesday 26 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP DEMANDS GOVERNMENT ACTION ON POST OFFICE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is calling on the Government to rein in the post regulator who wants to force competition in postal services in the UK three years before other EU countries.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “I am very concerned indeed about the job losses in Consignia - the controversial new name for the Post Office. This was an organisation that regularly turned in profits until two years ago and it is now being regarded as some kind of basket case. It isn’t.”

“Clearly, the Post Office management has to take a lorry load of responsibility for what is happening. But the Government - as the sole shareholder for what is still a national institution - cannot simply wash its hands of the matter and say it is up to the independent regulator.”

“Opening up the UK postal market to competition well in advance of other EU countries will destabilise the Post Office. It can only function effectively if it is allowed to cross subsidise its loss making services with the profitable ones. Allowing the private sector to cherry pick will jeopardise the universal service obligation under which the Royal Mail guarantees to deliver a letter to any address in the UK for the same price. Can anybody imagine the private sector operators would do that? No way.”

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 042/02 Tuesday 26 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR ACTION ON NOXIOUS SMELLS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is pressing the Government to conduct a major review of legislation covering smells in the atmosphere. He says terrible smells - unless dealt with rapidly - can have a major impact of people's health, plunging them into depression.

The MP quizzed Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, on the guidance given to local authorities on their powers to control emissions of noxious smells. The Minister said a programme to review all the guidance notes on odours is underway.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "Smells can be as big a problem as noise so I welcome this review. I've had constituents driven out of their homes by noxious smells and I want councils to have all the powers they need to bring the offenders to book."

Note to Editors: The Minister told the MP: Local authorities have powers to control smells which are a statutory nuisance under Part Ill of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. No guidance has been issued to authorities in relation to these powers.

Local authorities Also regulate smells as part of their responsibilities under Part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to control air pollution from a range of industrial processes (Local Air Pollution Control). The Government issues a series of statutory guidance notes for local authorities on what constitute the Best Available Techniques Not Entailing Excessive Cost for minimising air emissions from a range of industrial processes. Odour is addressed in these guidance notes where appropriate. The notes are all published and are listed on my Department's website http//www-defra-govuk/environment/airquality/lapc/default.htm A programme to review all the guidance notes is underway, and draft revisions can be found either on the DEFRA website or on the Environment Agency's website(www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/lapc/?version=]), depending on the stage of progress,

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 043/02 Tuesday 26 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WELCOMES GO AHEAD FOR NEW MILITARY TRANSPORT PLANE

News that the German Parliament has given the go ahead for the purchase of a new military transport plane based on the successful Airbus will boost jobs in Lancashire predicts Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP has backed a Commons motion, tabled by Chorley MP, Lindsay Hoyle, congratulating the German Government. The project, involving four nations, depended on a final OK from the Germans.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "After a troubled period for the aerospace industry, this comes as very good news."

Note to Editors: The Commons motion reads: That this House congratulates the German Government on allocating the funding of 5.1 billion euros for its order of the A400M project; congratulates the UK Government on its support for the A400M programme; notes that this announcement will allow the United Kingdom to press ahead with the construction work which will secure and create thousands of jobs in the United Kingdom; and calls on the Government to continue working with its European partners on the A400M project and other joint defence projects which will benefit the United Kingdom aerospace industry.

Note 2 to Editors: Last month, in response to a letter from the Pendle MP on the challenges facing the aerospace industry in the North West, the Prime Minister said: "The downturn in air passenger traffic, which was brought to a head by the events of 11 September, has caused widespread problems for the aerospace industry, both in the UK and throughout the world. The Government acted swiftly to underwrite, on a temporary basis, third party war risk insurance for UK airlines and service providers to the airline industry, an initiative that has subsequently been widely copied elsewhere. This action enabled UK airlines to continue to operate and thus helped to avoid what would have been an even worse situation for the aerospace industry. You will be aware that Stephen Byers ,announced on

more follows

MP WELCOMES GO AHEAD FOR TRANSPORT PLANE

13 December financial assistance of up to £40 million to compensate
airlines for losses arising directly from 11 September.

In the past few years, the Government has provided very considerable financial support to the aerospace industry through Launch Investment and funding for research and technology. Also, working in close connection with the Society of British Aerospace Companies (SBAC), the DTI has supported and continues to support a series of programmes designed to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the UK industry. I believe that this support has put the industry in a much better position than it would otherwise have been, both to ride out the current difficult period, and also to seize the opportunities that will arise when the situation starts to return to normal. Meanwhile, we have also taken direct steps to help the industry and its employees.

Given the importance of the aerospace industry for the supply of defence equipment to our Armed Forces, not to mention its role as a significant employer, the Ministry of Defence has, of course, a close interest in its success. The industry's order books - not least those of BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce have the benefit of a very large and ongoing programme of work from a wide and diverse series of projects on order from the MOD.

You may be aware that the contract for the A400M transport aircraft was signed on 18 December. This is obviously very good news for the MOD, Airbus and all the companies in the supply chain (although the commitments do not come into effect until Germany achieves final approval from the German Parliament). Under the commercial approach adopted for the programme, it is the responsibility of the prime contractor, Airbus Military SAS, to manage the allocation of contracts to maximise the benefits of best aircraft manufacturing practice within the agreed national workshare arrangements.

At the end of October the Government was able to affirm the UK's participation in perhaps the largest military procurement programme in history, the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). The UK is the sole collaborative partner with the US for the programme, and the overall value to British industry of this project could be as much as £24 billion or more. Some 3,500 UK jobs will be sustained or created in

the short term, with perhaps 8,500 in the longer term. Most importantly, the UK defence industry has won this work entirely on its merits, and is deserving of much congratulation for that.

We are aware that the US is looking at the possibility of bringing JSF into service sooner than originally intended, but no decisions have yet been taken; we will of course continue to keep our own in-service date for our Joint Combat Aircraft under review.

Eurofighter has been in production for a few years, and the first production aircraft are now being assembled at BAE Systems Warton in Lancashire. Aircraft development and production is already subject to a very tight timetable, but it is sustaining more than 6000 the UK, a figure which will rise to 14,000 at the peak of production.

The MOD has examined ways in which it may be possible to bring orders

more follows

MP WELCOMES GO AHEAD FOR TRANSPORT PLANE (3)

forward, and they are always happy to discuss with the industry any specific proposals that may have mutual benefit for both parties. Where innovative solutions are possible, they will seek to capitalise on these, working in partnership with the industry.

The MOD is keeping in close touch with industry leaders, who have met with Ministers and officials to discuss the situation both bilaterally and with, fora such as the National Defence Industries Council. But they have not identified any prudent means of bringing orders forward within both our available resources and the capacity of the industry. I hope this explains the situation.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 045/02 Tuesday 12 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MINISTER GETS THE WRAP AROUND IN NELSON

Treasury Minister Paul Boateng was at McMillan Nursery, Nelson this week (Monday) to open its new Offsprings Club. The scheme includes a Wrap-around club providing breakfast, lunch and after school care, a playgroup and a holiday play

scheme and is open 50 weeks a year. There are currently 24 children attending the scheme.

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “It was great that Paul Boateng came along to officially open the new facilities at McMillan Nursery. I know he enjoyed himself immensely and the staff at the nursery have told me how delighted they were he was able to visit them.”

The new purpose built facility was funded mainly by Kinderquest, part of the New Opportunities Fund with some additional support from Pendle Borough Council.

The MP said: “High quality care for our young children is essential to give them a good start in life, I am delighted we have just that facility in Nelson.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 046/02 Tuesday 12 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

DENTISTS ON THE MOVE - SMILES ALL ROUND

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the news that the Mobile Dental Surgery will be officially launched Thursday 21 March at 10.00am in Barnoldswick. The service has been funded by Pendle Primary Care Group to serve the rural population of Barnoldswick and Earby. Its purchase is part of a wider government initiative to improve access to NHS dentistry.

The MP, who lives in Barnoldswick and famously described East Lancashire as a dental desert because of the shortage of dentists, has long pressed the Government to

give the area the priority it deserves. The dental health of children in East Lancashire is amongst the worst in the country.

He said: “This brilliant idea of a mobile surgery first saw light in April last year and I was more than happy to support the bid for funding put in by East Lancashire Health Authority. I am naturally delighted to now see the scheme come alive. Pendle has been crying out for more NHS dentists and the idea of a mobile surgery is inspired.”

He continued: “Many people struggle to get into their nearest town and a mobile surgery will travel around the largely rural areas of Pendle bringing a dentist to the doorsteps. Providing access for everyone to NHS dentists has long been is a top priority for me and this new initiative should bring smiles all round!”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 046/02 Wednesday 13 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WARNS ON SHEEP DIP HAZARDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has repeated his call on the Government to make a statement of the hazards of Organophosphate Sheep Dip for farmers.
Last week the MP challenged the leader of the House, Robin Cook, to make a statement on the Government’s position following publication in the Lancet earlier this month of a report saying that organophosphates ‘contribute to the reported ill health of people who dip sheep.’

The MP said: “We all know organophosphate sheep dips are hazardous and that farmers who use them have to be properly protected. I am pressing the Government to

provide a clear statement of exactly what steps farmers must undertake when using these chemicals. We cannot allow them to put their health at risk. The safeguards must be watertight."

Note to editor: Research published in the Lancet by Professor Nicola Cherry and others took a sample of 175 farmers with ill health that they attributed to sheep dip. They were asked to nominate farmers, who were not blood relatives, who had undertaken similar amounts of sheep dipping, who were of a similar age, but who were thought to be in good health. 234 such farmers were included. Genetic teats were undertaken on the two samples. The results showed statistically significant genetic differences between the two groups in that part for the genotype that hydrolyses diazinonoxon, the active metabolite of diazinon, an organophosphate used in sheep dip. The conclusion was unequivocal: These results suggest that organophosphates contribute to the reported ill health of people who dip sheep.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 048/02 Wednesday 20 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MORE ORGANS REQUIRED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is answering the call from the British Medical Association (BMA) to support the Organ Donation Bill at Westminster today. This Private Member's Bill - brought in by Midland's MP Tom Watson - would change the system to one of 'presumed consent', where it is assumed that people are willing to donate their organs after death unless they opt out.

The MP, who, last year, registered his name with the NHS to become an organ donor said: "The huge success of heart, liver and kidney transplants mean they are now commonplace. Despite wide publicity to encourage people to register there is still an

increasing gap between the supply of organs for donation and the numbers of people requiring a transplant."

He continued: "The current system is unable to meet the increasing demands placed upon it and steps must be taken as a matter of urgency to increase the availability of organs for transplantation."

At the end of December 2001, 6,842 people were on the transplant waiting list . Studies show that around 70% of the population would be willing to donate organs after their death, yet only 15% of the people are registered on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

The MP said: "Organ transplantation has saved thousands of lives and many more could be saved with this new system. With the proper safeguard's in place for people who do not wish to donate their organs I think this is the way forward."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 049/02 Wednesday 20 March 2002

NO NEED TO RUBBISH PENDLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed a Government report which gives Pendle Borough Council the thumbs up for their waste management. The service includes refuse collection, street cleaning and recycling.

The MP said: “It is very encouraging to see that in Pendle we are ahead of the Government’s recycling targets. We can all do that little bit more and the council are constantly looking at ways of making recycling easier for us.”

The inspection report highlighted a number of key strength’s including
• The refuse collection service is area based, has a new fleet and is now financially breaking even
• A variety of schemes have helped Pendle to achieve the 2003/4 recycling target already and more demanding targets have been agreed locally.
• The service carries out significant education and enforcement programmes to pro-actively reduce litter, and 97 per cent of the streets overall of high or acceptable cleanliness.

The MP said: “People feel better about their community if the streets are clean and the bins are emptied, the council does its bit but we can all get involved, especially re-cycling as much as we can.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 050/02 Thursday 21 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

JOBLESS DOWN IN PENDLE

The number of people out of work in Pendle in February and claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance stood at 1,235 - down from 1,307 in January 2002. This represents an unemployment rate of 3.6%. There were 904 men and 331 women out of work. Nationally, the claimant count has risen and now stands at just over 947,200.

Commenting on the figures, local MP, Gordon Prentice, said: “The news that 200 workers at Homestyle Contracts in Nelson will be gone by the end of May is tragic. These are very difficult times for some areas of manufacturing - especially in textiles. We are seeing a growing number of jobs in the service industry and while this is very welcome it is clearly no substitute for a strong manufacturing sector.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 051/02 Thursday 21 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP BIDS FOR EXTRA HELP FOR AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

A fresh bid to secure Government support for the aerospace industry in East Lancashire was made by local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP met Industry Minister, Alan Johnson, at the Trade and Industry HQ in London. The MP was joined by his East Lancs colleagues Greg Pope and Peter Pike. The meeting covered employment and related issues including the contribution being made by the new development agency.”

The MP said: “I am anxious to forge the closest possible relationship between the DTI, the Ministry of Defence and the North West Aerospace Alliance (NWAA). We need to ensure the aerospace industry has as much help as necessary through the next 2 years which we know will be difficult following the downturn in the industry following 11 September.”

“I had the chance to speak in detail to the Minister about the 5 point plan drawn up by the NWAA.”

Note to editor: The five point plan is as follows: 1. North West Aerospace Innovation Centre - bringing together the industry and the eight North West universities to support future aerospace and related high technology products and services. The North West Development Association is making initial funding of £20 million available for the initial phase of the programme, for which a feasibility study is already under way. 2. Supplier to vendor status - an initiative to elevate ‘build to print manufacturers’ in the supply chain to become vendors of added value products and services. This move is aimed at improving the competitive position of companies and improving employment prospects for skilled people. 3. Mini consortia - a further extension of the Alliance’s successful initiative to become a facilitator in bringing together companies to bid for larger package of work and long-term ‘kit of parts’ contracts on major programmes such as Eurofighter Typhoon. 4. Foresight issues - to improve links under the Government’s Foresight Programme and ensure that UK defence and aerospace remains a major contributor to wealth and national security. 5. Trade services - the Alliance will continue to be a catalyst in developing marketing opportunities, encouraging networking and adopting a pro-active role in lobbying on behalf of the industry. Companies will be encouraged to benchmark their performance against the highest international standards and exchange best practice.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 55/02 Friday 12 April 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE HAILS PLAN TO TACKLE EMPTY HOUSES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed news that the Government has designated Pendle as one of ten new "pathfinder" areas where special help is to be given to tackle the problem of derelict, abandoned and low demand property. The East Lancashire group of authorities includes Blackburn, Hyndburn and Burnley as well as Pendle.

The announcement, made earlier this week by Local Government and Regions Minister, Stephen Byres, was billed as "putting the heart and soul back into rundown housing areas".

Byres said: "Derelict homes don't just scar the landscape. They make life intolerable for those still living there. Those who can leave. Those left are often trapped in negative equity. Legitimate landlords struggle whilst rogue landlords flourish." He pledged that the Government would work with local people "to deliver the change necessary".

Gordon Prentice commented: "Pendle and the other local authorities in East Lancashire have made the case for additional help to tackle the dire state of so much of the housing in the area. We know what needs to be done. We need to crack on and do it."

Note to Editors: Low demand housing is defined as neighbourhoods of at least 50 dwellings where private sector housing is predominant and one or more of the following symptoms apply: • private property value particularly low and/or falling in absolute terms; • high private sector void rate; • high turnover of population; • significant incidence of long term private sector voids or abandoned properties; • visibly high incidence of properties for sale or let

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 056/02 Monday 15 April 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP WANTS MEETING WITH MINISTER AND COUNTY COUNCIL IN BID TO END CARE HOMES CRISIS

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, is to press for a meeting with Health Minister Jacqui Smith and Hazel Harding, the Leader of Lancashire County Council in a fresh bid to end the crisis in residential care in Lancashire. The County Council has unleashed a storm of protests over its proposals to close 35 of its homes.

Speaking from Westminster today, the Pendle MP said: “There is a dialogue of the deaf taking place and the County has got to start listening. The county has embarked

on a consultation but I haven't met anyone yet who agrees with what is happening. If, at the end of the day, these proposals are not taken off the table, then I will call on the Government to intervene."

Note to Editors: Last week, the MP asked the Minister to outline the circumstances in which responsibility for social services would be removed from a local authority.

The Minister told the MP: "It is for local councils with social services responsibilities to meet their statutory obligations and achieve best value for the people they serve. We have agreed a protocol on the use of intervention powers with the Local Government Association. This forms Annex D of the (former) Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions Circular 10/99. The protocol sets out the framework to discuss policy for the use of the intervention powers set out in the Local Government Act 1999. It states "Except in cases of serious service failure or unless there is a need for urgent intervention the authority will normally be given the opportunity to make the necessary improvements itself." The Secretary of State for Health would only use the power "to transfer responsibility to another local authority or third party" when it was necessary to protect the lives of vulnerable children and adults."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 057/02 Tuesday 16 April 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

POST OFFICE WOULD BE BACK IN THE BLACK WITH 1p ON COST OF A STAMP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says Consignia (the controversially renamed Post Office) would be back in profit if 1p goes on the cost of a stamp. Last month, the MP called on the Government to rein in the post regulator who wants to force competition in postal services in the UK three years before other EU countries.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: "The cost of a stamp has not increased for years. A 1p increase would bring in £170m and who on earth would begrudge the Post Office that?"

In the wake of the controversy over the threatened job losses in the Post Office, the MP quizzed Industry Minister Douglas Alexander on the revenues generated by an increase in postal prices. The minister replied:

"Increases in the prices of first and second class stamps require the approval of Postcomm. The company estimates that an increase of one pence on both and first

and second class stamps would generate additional income of £170 million over the financial year."

Prentice observed: "The Post Regulator, Postcomm, has its own agenda about opening up the market in the UK to competition - years ahead of other EU countries. Here's the rub. It is the regulator that has to sanction any increase in postal charges. Postcomm paints a picture of an organisation, the Post Office, on its knees yet 1p on a stamp could balance the accounts."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 058/02 Tuesday 16 April 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR MORE UN OBSERVERS IN KASHMIR

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, today called for more UN observers to help keep the peace in Kashmir - the territory hotly disputed by the two new nuclear weapon states of Pakistan and India.

The MP told Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, during Commons questions this afternoon that the area was a tinderbox and could set off a third world war with incalculable consequences for the planet. He called for more UN military observes to police the de facto border - the so called line of control.

The MP said: "The line of control extends for 450 miles yet there are only 45 military observers - one for every ten miles of territory. The Government should urge the UN to put in many more."

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: "Some of the outposts are miles away from the line of control. We need many more observers to help keep the peace. Neither side would knowing fire on UN observers. I am pretty sure of that."

The Pendle MP visited the line of control in 1999 just weeks before General Musharraf took over the Government of Pakistan in a bloodless coup.

Note to Editors: The British Government's position is this: It welcomes President Musharraf's proscription of terrorist organisations, and the subsequent action that he has taken against extremist groups in Pakistan. But Pakistan needs to do more to ensure that all cross-border infiltration ceases. The Government however remains deeply concerned about the military mobilisation on both sides of

the border. The current stand-off is destabilising. What is important is that support for terrorism, in whatever form, stops so that a proper political dialogue can begin.

more follows

MP CALLS FOR MORE UN OBSERVERS IN KASHMIR

The UK has long called for an end to externally supported terrorism in Kashmir. We have pressed the Pakistani authorities to bring about an end to all infiltration by terrorists from the Pakistani side of the Line of Control and international border and welcome the steps taken so far,

The Government remains concerned by the human rights situation in Kashmir. It condemns all acts of violence that bring suffering to the People of Kashmir and urges militants to renounce violence permanently.

The UK Government continues to press the Indian Government to allow greater access to Kashmir for international human rights organisations. It urges the Indian Government to ensure that human rights violations are investigated and action brought against perpetrators.

The Government believes that a solution to Kashmir can be found through dialogue between India and Pakistan, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people, The UK will continue to work with international partners to ensure that India and Pakistan find ways to return to productive dialogue, as envisaged by the Simla agreement and the Lahore declaration.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 059/02 Wednesday 17 April 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE WELCOMES BUDGET BOOST FOR PENDLE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the Budget saying it will be a shot in the arm for the local health service.

Speaking from Westminster as the Chancellor sat down, the MP said: “The Budget is undoubtedly good for the NHS and will, I believe, secure its long term future. Spending on the NHS will rise from the equivalent of £2,370 per household this year to £4,060 per household in 2007/08 - a 45% real terms increase.”

The MP added: “I want this huge investment to deliver results. An NHS funded out of general taxation has, and is, the best way of financing our health service - especially these days when new drugs can be very expensive and new therapies for an

individual patient can costs tens of thousands - sometimes hundreds of thousands of pounds."

"None of us knows what is round the corner so far as our own health is concerned. So we all pay and we pool the risk between the 60 million of us in the UK. The one per cent extra in National Insurance will mean £3.70 a week for someone on average earnings for the NHS; pensioners will pay nothing more. The increase will apply from April next year. The Conservatives disagree with us. They want to force people to take out private health insurance."

"Elsewhere, the Budget is good for Pendle people. The Child Tax Credit next year will give more support for all middle and lower income families who are bringing up children. This year, the £2.50 a week increase in the Working Families Tax Credit will mean more help to 3,328 families in Pendle."

more follows

PRENTICE WELCOMES BUDGET BOOST FOR PENDLE

"Unemployment in Britain is at its lowest since 1975 and has fallen by 22% since 1997 in Pendle alone. Extending the New Deal will help more people in Pendle into jobs and the Working Tax Credit from next year will make work pay for more people on lower incomes."

"Finally the Budget delivers extra help for the 2,075 businesses in Pendle with cuts in the starting rate for corporation tax and small business rate and other measures to encourage enterprise and new businesses.

Free TV licences will continue for all pensioners over 75 and the winter fuel allowance will continue to be paid this year at £200 and for every year of this Parliament.

With an eye on the World Cup this summer, the Chancellor also announced a cut in the tax paid on real ale. The Chancellor told the House it was equivalent to 14p off each pint.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 060/02 Thursday 18 April 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP BACKS LOBBY TO KEEP AEROSPACE FLYING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, met workers from the Rolls Royce plant in Barnoldswick this afternoon during a big aerospace lobby of Parliament.

The delegation leader John Boardman and colleagues from Barlick together with Tom Gunner from the Society of British Aerospace Companies spelt out the challenges facing the industry in the wake of September 11.

Concerns focused on five key issues. Prentice commented: "There is a clear demand for a Government/aerospace industry task force to ensure the right hand knows what the left is going and making sure everything is co-ordinated. We also discussed the new Research and Development Tax Credit and how it would impact of firms such as RR. We spoke about regional grants and funding and launch aid."

"We also looked at training issues and how the industry can retain experienced people who will be needed when the upturn comes. The new Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) will bring in billions of pounds to the industry. We've got to make sure local firms are ready and able to do the huge amount of work that will be on offer."

The MP said he would be applying for a special Commons debate on aerospace to air workers' concerns.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 061/02 Wednesday 17 April 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PLP INSISTS HUNTING WITH DOGS MUST BE BANNED

The Parliamentary Labour Party has carried a motion tabled by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, applauding the Government's decision to use the Parliament Act if necessary to force through a ban on hunting with dogs.

The meeting earlier today heard from DEFRA Minister, Alun Michael, who has been given responsibility for bringing in the new Hunting Bill.

The Pendle MP told the PLP he was relieved the Government had finally nailed its colours to the mast "after years of flaffing around". He said the Alun Michael was the best person to see the Bill onto the statute book. He said to laughter that if Alun didn't deliver, the Minister's reputation would be shot to ribbons.

Speaking afterwards the Pendle MP said: "I doubt if the new round of consultation initiated by Alun will tell us anything we didn't already know."

Note to Editors: The motion carried by the PLP reads: "The PLP applauds the clear commitment given by the Government on 21 March 2002 that its forthcoming Hunting Bill, is amended by the Commons, will, if necessary, and in that amended form, be enacted using the Parliament Act."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 062/02 Thursday 9 May 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT - A CHANCE TO CHOOSE

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcomed the publication today of the Government's proposals for regional assemblies in England. He says he now wants to see a debate on the plans which could involve the creation of a single tier of local government in those regions which opt for an assemby.

The MP added: "People need to be convinced that the regional assemblies will make a difference. If it is seen as just another layer of politicians, people won't buy it."

"Regional Government should come at a price for Westminster MPs. In my view there is no way that we can keep the present number of MPs at Westminster if people signal a real desire for regional assemblies. In my view, we would need to cut by half the number of Westminster MPs. That means people like me."

Note to Editors: John Prescott, speaking in the Commons today, said: "There is a strong and growing demand in some regions to have a distinct democratic voice and a greater say over their own future. The people of the English regions should rightly have the same choice that we gave to the people of Scotland, Wales and London. This White Paper is about striking the right balance.

It is about trusting the people It is about responding to the needs of a modem, diverse, and more progressive society; and its about creating the conditions for greater prosperity and reducing disparity in and between our regions.
The key is flexibility. That requires a pragmatic approach and the consent of the people of the regions. Where there is a referendum in favour of them we will establish elected Regional Assemblies. And I believe where one or two regions lead, others will follow.

Assembly Powers and Finance: The White Paper sets out the powers, functions and financial arrangements for these new elected regional assemblies. They will have real power and funding to improve the quality of life of people in their region particularly by improving regional

more follows

economic performance. Indeed, raising growth by just half a percent for the worst performing regions would increase our national wealth by £20 billion in 10 years. And as the Pre-Budget Report made clear, if all regions raised their productivity to the national average the average person in the UK would be £1,000 a year better off. Regional assemblies will be responsible for developing joined-up regional strategies on issues such as:
Sustainable development; Economic development and regeneration;
Skills and employment; Planning; Transport; Housing; Health improvement; and Culture

Assemblies will have a range of powers to help them deliver those strategies. For example, they will allocate funding for economic development, housing, tourism, arts and sport, And they will be responsible for the Regional Development Agencies - appointing the Board and approving the Regional Economic Strategy.

Funding: Regional assemblies will be funded primarily by central government grant. They will have complete freedom to spend that grant as they judge best. We will agree targets with them and provide a single pot for regional government. In addition they will have the power to raise further funds through a precept on council tax and through borrowing.

Naturally budgets will vary depending on the population of each region, But on current expenditure the budget for the North East would be around £350m a year and in the North West would be around £730m. And on top of that assemblies will have a direct influence over large amounts of central government's public expenditure - some extra £500 million in the North East and £1.3 billion in the North West.

Constitution: Elected assemblies need to be big enough to properly represent the interests of the different communities in the, region, but not so big that they become unmanageable, We therefore propose that assemblies should have 25 to 35 members. For an assembly of that size it is important that there is broad political representation in the assembly.

In Scotland, Wales and London we have used the Additional Member system of proportional representation to elect the members of the Parliament and Assemblies. On balance we have decided to use the same system for English regional assemblies. The boundaries of each region will be the existing ones used by the Government Offices for the Regions and the Regional Development Agencies.

Stakeholders: In addition to elected regional assemblies we would like to see greater involvement of groups such as the business community, trade unions, voluntary organisations and environmental groups. After a region has voted for an elected assembly, we intend to introduce further legislation enabling assemblies to be established. This would make it possible for the first regional assembly to be up and running early in the next Parliament."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 064/02 Monday 13 May 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

VICAR OF DIBLEY DESERVES FAIR PENSION says MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has challenged the Church of England to top up the pensions of women priests who are, as yet, unable to become bishops in the Church of England.

The MP - who takes a close interest in Church of England affairs - told the Commons the retiring Archbishop of Canterbury would receive a pension of £17,000 a year when he retires later this year.

The MP told Church Commissioner, Stuart Bell: “There are currently 110 bishops - all male - who get a pension on retirement of just under 15,000. The maximum pension a priest can receive is just under £10,000. But what about the vicar of Dibley? What about women of the cloth?”

The MP called for a pensions “top up” for women priests. He also wanted the Archbishop’s Council to look at the matter further. We need to top up their pensions.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said: “We’ve only had women priests in the Church of England for 8 years and they are, for the moment, barred from becoming bishops. The cannot clock up the 37 years needed to get a full pension. I want some of the huge wealth of the Church of England to be realised to give the women priests a retirement free from penury.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 065/02 Monday 13 May 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP WELCOMES LORDS REFORM PLAN AS "HUGE STEP FORWARD"

The Government's plans to allow Parliament itself to decide the shape of Lords reform has been described as a huge step forward by Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

In the Commons today, the Leader of the House, Robin Cook, told MPs the Government would like to see a joint committee of both Houses consider the reform proposals and come forward with options on which both Houses could come to a view on a free vote.

Prentice told the Commons: "My friend on the from bench (Robin Cook) deserves a medal. He will go down as one of the great Parliamentary reformers."

The Pendle MP drew attention to two potential problem areas - the membership of the joint committee and what happens if there is gridlock between the two Houses.

Quoting from the analysis of the Government's White Paper on Lords Reform "Completing the Reform", prepared by the Lord Chancellor's Department, the MP voiced concern that the only group responding to the consultation who wanted a reformed House with less than 50% elected membership were the peers themselves.

Note to Editors: The Pendle MP is a member of the Public Administration Select Committee whose recent report found the "centre of gravity" around which reformist opinion could coalesce.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News **from Gordon Prentice MP**

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 069/02 Thursday 16 May 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE WELCOMES CASH TO HELP TACKLE PROBLEM OF EMPTY HOUSES

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today welcomed confirmation that the Government has allocated a pump priming £2.66m to look at ways at tackling the problem of empty and abandoned housing in Pendle, Burnley, Hyndburn and Blackburn. A further £1m will be used to monitor and evaluate the initiative.

Pendle has been designated as one of ten new "pathfinder" areas where special help is to be given to tackle the problem of derelict, abandoned and low demand property. The East Lancashire group of authorities includes those listed above as well as Pendle.

The Pendle MP commented: “The Government has said it wants to “put the heart and soul back into rundown housing areas". Clearly, this is a welcome injection of cash. But it is a first step. We need more - much more - to follow if we are to make an impact. Pendle and the other local authorities in East Lancashire have made the case for additional help to tackle the dire state of so much of the housing in the area. There is no dispute about the scale of the problem that has to be tackled.”

Note to Editors: Low demand housing is defined as neighbourhoods of at least 50 dwellings where private sector housing is predominant and one or more of the following symptoms apply: • private property value particularly low and/or falling in absolute terms; • high private sector void rate; • high turnover of population; • significant incidence of long term private sector voids or abandoned properties; • visibly high incidence of properties for sale or let

Note 2 to Editors: The Secretary of State, Stephen Byres, wrote to the Pendle MP today as follows: Last month I was please . d to announce we were inviting the local councils in your area to develop a pathfinder project to tackle low demand and abandoned housing. Today I have announced that

more follows

PRENTICE WELCOMES CASH TO HELP TACKLE PROBLEM OF EMPTY HOUSES

with immediate effect the Chief Secretary, Andrew Smith, has agreed to award £25m from the Capital Modernisation Fund to invest in the pathfinder projects.

This investment is intended to give a kick-start to the process of preparing the strategic plan that will inform future investment in the pathfinder area. It can also, if the Pathfinder partners wish, fund some small scale early interventions to test out different approaches where this is supported by their housing market assessment and is a good use of money. Such early wins would help demonstrate interest in and commitment to the area, and may themselves help bring some early stability to local markets.

We will discuss in more detail with Pathfinders over the next few months the content of a strategic plan but we envisage that it will include proposals for action for a 10 to 15 year period that are designed to transform the area. It will also be essential that we see evidence that other non-housing spend is being brought to bear to ensure that a comprehensive and coherent approach is taken to renewal. Thus the strategic plan must cover both the housing and non-housing investment, the key priorities within the sub-region, major outputs, milestones and the delivery vehicle at the more local levels,

The Capital Modernisation Funding will be divided equally between the 9 Pathfinder projects. I shall therefore be prepared to make available £2.66m to each Pathfinder (the remaining £1m will be used for collective monitoring and evaluation of the Pathfinder projects).

This allocation does, not of course, imply a commitment of further resources as that will have to await the outcome of the Spending Review. It is also unlikely that we would distribute any further resources on an equal shares basis as we would clearly wish to take account of, for example, the varying needs of the areas concerned.

I acknowledged in my last letter the enormity of the low demand problem. I remain as determined as ever to tackle it. Indeed the Government has recently reaffirmed its Commitment to meeting our target to turn around the incidence of low demand by 2010. The Pathfinders are a first step towards that. The funding I have announced today is a significant and welcome boost and I am delighted that your area will I benefit.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 072/02 Thursday 13 June 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

£500,000 BOOST TO BUILD NEW SPORTS HALL AT MARSDEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Marsden Community School in Percy Street Nelson is to get £500.000 towards the construction of a new sports and arts hall. Local MP, Gordon Prentice, says he is thrilled to bits at the news.

In a letter to the MP, Arts Minister, Tessa Blackstone, says "Funding is being made available through an innovative partnership between central Government and lottery distributors. I am sure that these new facilities will make a significant contribution to improving provision and opportunities for both pupils and the wider community.

The MP commented: "I've always said Pendle schools need to be given a sporting chance. It's great news."

Note to Editors: On 12 June, the Arts Minister wrote to the Pendle MP as follows: As you know, in March last year the Government announced the areas which would benefit from funding to improve primary school sports and arts facilities through the Space for Sport and Arts (SSA) programme.

Funding is being made available through an innovative partnership between central Government (a joint DCMS/DfES bid to the Capital Modernisation Fund) and tottery distributors (the New Opportunities Fund, the Arts Council of England, and Sport England). Final grant applications are now being assessed and I am delighted to tell you, on behalf of the Department and the other funding partners, that Lancashire LEA will receive a grant award of £500,000 towards the construction of a sports and arts hail at Nelson Marsden Community School.

I am sure that these new facilities will make a significant contribution to improving provision and opportunities for both pupils and the wider community. We have not yet announced this grant award publicly but intend to do so along with other SSA awards this summer.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 080/02 Thursday 20 June 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP PRESSES GOVERNMENT TO GUARD AGAINST NEW OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, whose constituency was hit by foot and mouth last year has urged the Government to adopt a belt and braces approach to protect rural communities and consumers against the possibility of a further outbreak of the deadly disease. He quizzed Agriculture Minister, Elliot Morley, on the steps the Government was taking to deal with the ever present threat.

The Minister told the MP today: "In the event of a future outbreak of foot and mouth disease our ability to quickly contain and eradicate the disease will be vital, DEFRA has already published an interim operational contingency plan to support the European Union approved strategic plan, veterinary instructions and local plans that already existed. This draws extensively on experience of the 2001 outbreak..."

The MP commented: "Foot and Mouth had a crippling effect on the countryside. We all need reassurance that the Government is doing everything humanly possible to guard against the nightmare scenario - the re-emergence of foot and mouth."

Note to Editors: Elliot Morley told the Pendle MP : "We are taking a number of steps to reduce the possibility of a further outbreak of foot and mouth disease through initiatives covering prevention; disease surveillance and contingency planning.

On 28 March the Government launched an action plan to reduce the risk of plant and animal disease entering the country illegally and threatening our agricultural and horticultural industries. A copy of the action plan can be found in the House libraries. As recommended by the Policy Commission on Food and Farming, the action plan commits the government to undertake a risk assessment of the threat posed by contaminated illegal meat imports. This is well underway and due to report in the autumn. The

more follows

MP PRESSES GOVERNMENT TO GUARD AGAINST NEW OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH

information provided by the risk assessment will help inform decisions about the nature of risks from imports so that resources can be efficiently targeted. Alongside the risk assessment, work is being carried out to improve publicity and raise awareness of the risks posed by personal imports. Other work is concerned with improving detection and a pilot detector dog scheme will be operational later in the year.

We attach great importance to veterinary surveillance for the early detection of now or exotic diseases/ infections, including foot and mouth disease, Work on a strategy to enhance veterinary surveillance was curtailed last year because of the foot and mouth epidemic. This work has resumed and a strategy document is now in early draft form and will be issued for public consultation later this year.

In the event of a future outbreak of foot and mouth disease our ability to quickly contain and eradicate the disease will be vital, DEFRA has already published an interim operational contingency plan to support the European Union approved strategic plan, veterinary instructions and local plans that already existed. This draws extensively on experience of the 2001 outbreak and DEFRA will develop this further to achieve better emergency preparedness, taking full account of the recommendations of the independent inquiries.

Additionally, Preventative measures introduced during the 2001 outbreak remain in force, 'e.g. the ban on feeding pig swill to livestock and the 20 day standstill on the movement of livestock.

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 081/02 Tuesday 25 June 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

WIGS IN COURT MUST GO says PENDLE MP

The practice of wearing wigs in court could soon be a thing of the past says Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice.

The MP, who has long campaigned for court dress more in keeping with the times, says he is delighted the Government is looking at the issue.

The MP quizzed Ministers in the Lord Chancellor's Department about discussions Lord Irvine has had with the judiciary concerning the wearing of wigs in court.

The Minister, Rosie Winterton, told the MP: "Following a public opinion survey which we will shortly be conducting in England and Wales, the Lord Chancellor will issue a consultation paper containing proposals on possible alternatives to the current modes of court dress for judges, lawyers and court staff. The Lord Chancellor is in regular contact with the Lord Chief Justice and the other Heads of Division and has kept them informed on the progress of the project."

Prentice commented: "It is about time said goodbye to wigs in court. In hot weather they are scratchy. They look ludicrous. And solicitors appearing in court don't wear

them but barristers do. This can create confusion with people believing there is a pecking order in Court with the bewigged ones being more important."

We don't even make horsehair wigs here in Britain any more. I think we have to import them from China."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 082/02 Tuesday 25 June 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

INDIA MUST ALLOW UN OBSERVERS IN KASHMIR says PENDLE MP

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, today pressed Foreign Office Ministers to use their influence to get more UN observers posted along the disputed line of control in Kashmir. The MP has described the area as a nuclear tinderbox with Pakistan and India eyeballing each other over the line of control.

At present, there are 40 UN observers to police 400 miles of border. One for every ten miles.

The Pendle MP - who takes a close interest in Kashmir issues - challenged Foreign Office Minister, Mike O'Brien, to press India to allow the UN access to its territory.

The MP said: "I want to see the line of control flooded with UN observers. On 16 April the Foreign Secretary told me in the House that "Looking to the future, there may well be a role for observers, under the auspices of the UN, better to enforce a proper peace". Why is the Government so laid back about things?"

The MP added: "What is the problem with India? It wants to see insurgency stopped. It must be in that country's interests to allow UN observers on their side of the line of control."

Speaking afterwards, the MP, who visited the line of control in 1999, said: "We are always told that nothing can move forward without the agreement of India and Pakistan. Surely, the presence of the UN, as the eyes and ears of the international community, can help preserve the peace in this flash point region."

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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 084/02 Tuesday 25 June 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP PRESSES THE CASE FOR FE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has told the Prime Minister that Further Education must become a priority of the Government.

The Pendle MP was speaking following a meeting yesterday of the PLP's (Parliamentary Labour Party's) Parliamentary Committee in Downing Street. He said: "The situation is urgent. And we need to conclude rapidly the review of student funding which is currently in hand."

"Further Education is at the forefront of the Government's education agenda. It needs the tools if it is to deliver."

The MP raised the issue in the Commons last Thursday (20 June) when he called on Robin Cook, the Leader of the House, to arrange a special debate on FE.

The MP told the Commons that an extra £311 million was going into FE up to 2004, but extra cash was needed now. HE said a big pay gap had opened up between teachers in schools and lecturers in FE.

The MP visited Nelson and Colne College last Friday (21 June) where he discussed things with Kath Belton, the College Principal, and, in a separate meeting, college lecturers.

The Government published a new consultation paper on FE on 20 June proposing a wide ranging shake up of the FE sector.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 087/02 Wednesday 3 July 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

REGIONAL DEVOLUTION NOT WORTH THE CANDLE UNLESS IT DELIVERS TANGIBLE BENEFITS - MP

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, told the House of Commons this afternoon that devolution to the English regions was not worth pursuing unless real, tangible benefits could be delivered.

The MP told Cabinet Office Minister, Nick Raynsford, that people were not prepared to accept another layer of salaried politicians and all the upheaval of another round of local government re-organisation unless the benefits were undeniable and quantifiable. If they were, and regional assembles were set up, then the number of MPs at Westminster should be axed by 40%, he said.

Speaking afterwards, the MP said it was the job of central government to address inequalities and imbalances between the regions. A North West Regional Assembly wouldn't have a gigantic pot of money where nothing exists today. Cash would still come from the central exchequer.

"The state of our housing in the North West is scandalous. The idea that we in North East Lancashire can solve our housing problem on our own is ludicrous. We need millions of pounds from the national government to tackle housing blight. People have got to see delivery on the ground."

"Changing administrative structures, creating new organisations is not a necessary prerequisite to tackling the problems we have in the North West. The Government has to pitch in. And we need to roll up our sleeves now and get stuck in."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 088/02 Wednesday 3 July 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PENDLE MP BACKS ENTITLEMENT CARDS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is backing Government plans to introduce new entitlement cards. The Government today issued a consultation paper setting out the proposals and seeking views on whether the cards should be voluntary or compulsory.

Home Secretary, David Blunkett, said identity fraud was costing about £1.3 billion a year.

The new cards would have biometric information - for example, about the iris, which is unique to each individual. The consultation would look at the type of information to be carried on the card. The citizen would know precisely what was on his or her card.

The Pendle MP said: “Thousands of people have their identities stolen every year. There are people out there with multiple identities, defrauding the rest of us.”

“The cards have to be counterfeit proof.”

“And, clearly, the civil liberties concerns have to be addressed.”

“But I do not have any objections in principle provided all the questions are addressed and answered.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 089/02 Thursday 4 July 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PRENTICE CHALLENGES GOVERNMENT TO TACKLE FUNDING GAP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has challenged the Government to close the funding gap which has opened up between schools and FE.

In the Commons this afternoon, the MP asked Education Minister, Ivan Lewis, how the Government could justify "the huge pay gap" between teachers in secondary schools and lecturers in FE.

The MP also pointed out to the double disadvantage of areas such as Pendle where there is no secondary school sixth forms. The only six form provision is at Nelson and Colne College. The MP claimed the resources going in to the College per student could amount to £1,000 less than the money that would be earmarked for sixth form secondary school students.

The Minister explained the gap had opened up as a result of the extra resources going into schools. The Government, he said, intends to close the gap over time.

Speaking afterwards, the Pendle MP said: "No-one disputes that huge amounts of money are now going into education. But the FE sector is too often seen as a Cinderella. The Government is addressing this issue and has recently published plans for the sector which are now out to consultation. I have no problems with that. The Government should listen to people in FE and others concerned about the education and skills agenda. But we need to act quickly."

The MP added: "Colleges are only now getting notification of their funding allocations for 2002/3 - a couple of months later than expected.."

more follows:
PRENTICE CHALLENGES GOVERNMENT TO TACKLE FUNDING GAP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION

<u>Note to Editors:</u> On 29 April, Education Minister Margaret Hodge was asked if she would make it her policy to award teachers in the FE and college sector pay awards equal to those teaching in secondary schools. She said: "It is for each college to agree annual pay rises and conditions of employment with its staff in the context of the overall resources available to them. We are, however, aware of the funding gap between schools and FE and have pledged to bring up levels of funding and allow upwards convergence over time as resources allow.

We are investing significant funding in the FE sector. In 2001- 02, £527 million extra was planned for FE - a 12 per cent. real terms increase with a further 3 per cent, increase this year. By 2003-4 annual funding for FE will have increased by £1.4 billion compared with 1997-98, a real terms increase of 20 per cent. The substantial additional investment we are making in the sector should help colleges and the trade unions reach agreement on appropriate salary increase this year.

We are also investing more than £311 million in the teaching pay initiative during the period 2001-4 to allow colleges, including sixth form colleges, to reward high quality teaching. This is separate to any general pay rise a teacher may receive.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 090/02 Tuesday 9 July 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

COLNE EARMARKED FOR BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS

BT has announced that BT's Colne telephone exchange is ready for upgrading to super fast internet access via broadband. The company has set a threshold of 400 subscribers to broadband in Colne for the exchange to be upgraded.

The MP commented: "The difference between broadband and standard telephone access to the internet is quite staggering. Broadband gives instantaneous access. It's the difference between watching television in colour and black and white."

"Broadband is already available in Nelson. Indeed my office already has broadband access. I want to see the whole of Pendle wired up asap."

Note to Editors: BT's Tim O'Sullivan wrote to the MP as follows: "I am delighted to announce that BT's broadband registration scheme went live this week.

Demand levels have been published for each of the first 338 exchanges being considered, which when met, will mean the exchanges will be enabled for our "ADSL" (asymmetric digital subscriber line) broadband service.

The exchange at Colne which serves part of your constituency has had a threshold of 400 user registrations set for it to be viable for broadband upgrade.

Consumers and businesses in the area can log their interest in ordering ADSL broadband through internet service providers who will record it on BT's broadband database (a full list of service providers who may offer the service is available at www.bt.com/broadband under the section on 'availability'). When 400 users have registered an interest, BT will inform service providers who must then convert registrations into advance orders. Once this has happened, the exchange will be enabled to deliver ADSL broadband.

I should point out that the threshold level set for each exchange is not the break even level for BT to recover the costs of enabling the exchange. But if the pattern of demand shown at exchanges already enabled is followed, then we will start to recover costs over

more follows

a three-year period.

This scheme will give an opportunity for everyone who wants ADSL broadband in the area to work together to help make it happen. As registration progresses, customers will be able to use www.bt.com/broadband to see the level of demand registered against the exchange. Your constituents in the Nelson exchange area already benefit from broadband and this registration scheme will enable the people served by the exchange at Colne to have a say in whether broadband is also brought to their area.

BT has already set a target of providing one million broadband connections by summer 2003 and has enabled 1,115 exchanges, serving 66% of UK households and 73% of current internet users. 900 exchanges are being reviewed for the broadband registration scheme and assuming there is enough demand for them to be enabled, then more than 80% of UK homes would be in areas served by the technology.

...We would like to see local businesses, chambers of commerce and all those interested in the economic prosperity of the area pull together to raise the demand for broadband to the level that will help us bring the benefits of the technology to Colne.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 051/02 Thursday 21 March 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP BIDS FOR EXTRA HELP FOR AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

A fresh bid to secure Government support for the aerospace industry in East Lancashire was made by local MP, Gordon Prentice. The MP met Industry Minister, Alan Johnson, at the Trade and Industry HQ in London. The MP was joined by his East Lancs colleagues Greg Pope and Peter Pike. The meeting covered employment and related issues including the contribution being made by the new development agency."

The MP said: "I am anxious to forge the closest possible relationship between the DTI, the Ministry of Defence and the North West Aerospace Alliance (NWAA). We need to ensure the aerospace industry has as much help as necessary through the next 2 years which we know will be difficult following the downturn in the industry following 11 September."

"I had the chance to speak in detail to the Minister about the 5 point plan drawn up by the NWAA."

Note to editor: The five point plan is as follows: 1. North West Aerospace Innovation Centre - bringing together the industry and the eight North West universities to support future aerospace and related high technology products and services. The North West Development Association is making initial funding of £20 million available for the initial phase of the programme, for which a feasibility study is already under way. 2. Supplier to vendor status - an initiative to elevate 'build to print manufacturers' in the supply chain to become vendors of added value products and services. This move is aimed at improving the competitive position of companies and improving employment prospects for skilled people. 3. Mini consortia - a further extension of the Alliance's successful

initiative to become a facilitator in bringing together companies to bid for larger package of work and long-term ‘kit of parts’ contracts on major programmes such as Eurofighter Typhoon. 4. Foresight issues - to improve links under the Government’s Foresight Programme and ensure that UK defence and aerospace remains a major contributor to wealth and national security. 5. Trade services - the Alliance will continue to be a catalyst in developing marketing opportunities, encouraging networking and adopting a pro-active role in lobbying on behalf of the industry. Companies will be encouraged to benchmark their performance against the highest international standards and exchange best practice.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

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For Immediate Release. No. 051/02 Thursday 21 March 2002
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News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 094/02 Tuesday 16 July 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MP HAILS EXTRA CASH FOR PENDLE SCHOOLS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has welcome the big cash boost for education announced in yesterday's Commons statement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown.

"This means spending per pupil will rise from £2,700 a year in 1997 and £3,500 last year to £4,900 per pupil by 2005/06 - a rise, after inflation, of 50% more per pupil than 1997 - more investment to help the 13,954 pupils in Pendle fulfil their potential."

In the Commons this afternoon, Education Secretary, Estelle Morris told MPs that core funding for further education will also increase over the next three years.

The MP added: "We are able to put in these additional resources because the economy is doing well. We have the lowest inflation and interest rates for forty years, and a fall in unemployment in Pendle by 27% since 1997."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No. 095/02 Wednesday 31 July 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

LOCAL MO WELCOMES NEW TAX BREAKS FOR COMMUNITY SPORTS CLUBS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has urged Pendle's community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) to register for a tax package, which will offer them the support and recognition they have long deserved.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "I welcome this new support for community amateur sports clubs and I very much hope that Pendle's sports clubs will apply for either the tax breaks or charitable status, which ever suits them best."

The measures in the new tax package will provide a range of tax reliefs for qualifying CASCs and some incentives for individuals to support their local CASC through donations. To be eligible, a club will need to be open to the whole community, organised on an amateur basis and provide facilities for, and promote participation in, one or more eligible sports. Registration is simple - clubs just need to contact the Inland Revenue, complete a short application form and provide accompanying documentation.

The tax package is the result the "Promoting Sport in the Community" consultation document which the Treasury launched in November 2001. The tax package announced in Budget 2002 has been widely welcomed by sports clubs and their representative bodies. The Inland Revenue website contains full guidance for clubs.

The majority of CASCs do also have the option of charitable status if they choose and are eligible, following the Charity Commission's announcement last November that it would recognise as charitable "the promotion of community participation in healthy recreation by providing facilities for playing particular sports". Following that announcement, DCMS and the

more follows

NEW TAX BREAKS FOR COMMUNITY SPORTS CLUBS

Charity Commission agreed on the improved guidance for sport which was announced in April. The Commission's website contains full details of how CASCs can apply, and Sport England have put in place Regional Advice Lines for local clubs (see website).

Note to Editors: From April 2002, the Government has introduced a range of tax reliefs for CASCs on their income and on donations which local people make to support them. To enjoy these benefits, a sports club should register with the Inland Revenue. Application forms and further details of the scheme can be obtained from the Inland Revenue's website at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk

Any club which registers will enjoy exemption from corporation tax on interest; corporation tax on any trading income up to £15,000; corporation tax on income from property up to £10,000; and capital gains on disposals of assets.

Clubs might, as an alternative, want to consider applying for charitable status, which brings an even wider range of tax benefits. The Charity Commission and Wand Revenue now accept as a charitable purpose "the promotion of community participation in healthy recreation by the provision of facilities for playing particular sports". That should open up the possibility of charitable status for far more clubs

than previously. More details can be found on the Charity Commission website at www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Contact: pager 07644 005297 and leave message or 01282 695471 (constituency); or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 096/02 Tuesday 6 August 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP MEETS HEALTH CHIEFS TO DISCUSS NELSON HEALTH CENTRE PROPOSALS

Plans to locate the proposed new Nelson Health Centre at Yarnspinners Wharf, on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Carr Road are to be discussed today in a meeting between Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, and Jim Heyes, the Chair of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Primary Care Trust, and its Chief Executive, David Peat.

The MP says he is not hostile to the plans providing any access problems are identified and addressed.

The MP said: “We badly need a new Health Centre. The present site next to the community hospital is far too cramped. In some surgeries there is hardly room to swing a cat. A new building with state of the art equipment is a top priority.”

Speaking before the meeting at the PCT HQ in Kenyon Road, Nelson, the MP said: “There big issues coming up which need to be discussed. The County Council has now published its proposals for residential care for the elderly and the views of the PCT are key. We also have the long running issue of GP retirements and how we are going to attract younger doctors into the area.”

Burnley Pendle and Rossendale has a budget of around £200m and a staff of about 1200. It is the largest PCT wholly within Lancashire. It works with 125 GPs in 48 practices; 68 dentists in 38 practices; 53 pharmacists and 34 opticians.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 097/02 Tuesday 13 August 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

PHOTOCALL: MP AT OPENING OF NEW SCHOOL IN BARROWFORD - St Thomas' CofE Primary School

Today, Tuesday, at 2pm.

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining the headteacher, Mrs Lloyd, staff and governors at the official opening of the new school in Wheatley Lane Road, Barrowford, today, Tuesday 13 August at 2pm.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 098/02 Wednesday 7 August 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SLATES LIB DEM PLANS FOR REGIONAL INCOME TAX

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, has lambasted proposals from the Liberal Democrats to allow a new regional tier of Government the powers to levy income tax.

The proposals, to be unveiled later this month, reportedly would allow regional variations in taxes - although their would be an equalisation formula to take account of regions' different tax bases. Reports say that the Lib Dem policy paper accepts that such devolution of power will mean a variation in standards of service in different

regions., saying this is commonplace in the United States, for example, where Vermont charges 7 cents more per dollar than neighbouring New Hampshire.

The paper suggests regional variations to a specially earmarked NHS tax would be allowed, with the contributions levied only on employees not employers.

The Pendle MP said: “The issue of how regional government is to be financed is a key issue that has to be addressed by its advocates. I am very sceptical about allowing, as a specific policy objective, variations between regions. I believe it is a core responsibility of central government to address the imbalances between the regions.”

“Individual regions could go it alone. But at a price and with, over time, big variations opening up in the standard of services offered to the public. Some regions at least are likely to be run by Parties other than the Government of the day at Westminster.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 099/02 Thursday 15 August 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP HAILS NEW STUDY INTO BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, told a meeting at Nelson and Colne College today that more had to be done to encourage Asian women to enter employment. He said that participation by Asians of Pakistani background was below all other groups with the sole exception of Bangladeshis.

The MP was speaking at the launch of a new study “Barriers to learning faced by women in Pendle” researched and written by Bushra Sarowat who works at the College.

The study sought to understand the barriers and find strategies to increase adult participation in learning. The top three barriers same for White and Pakistani respondents: family commitments;
cannot afford the course; course times unsuitable.

The MP said: “This study is an important contribution to our knowledge about the situation in Pendle. Entry into education is vitally important as learning is the route to

higher earnings and better and more fulfilling jobs. Quite apart from that, education being a good thing in its own right."

He continued: "The Government believes, as I do, that a job is the best form of social security. Full employment is our goal and we have made remarkable headway. 1.5 million more jobs have been created since 1997. Long term youth unemployment has fallen by 90% (90,000 to 5,000) and adult long term unemployment fallen by 70% - (525,000 to 156,000)."

"We have introduced the minimum wage; the working families tax

more follows

credit and increased child benefit to help ensure it pays to work."

"Getting unemployment down frees up resources. Ten years ago 1.6% of national income was spent on the cost of unemployment. Now we spend just 0.4% - savings worth a staggering £10 billion every year."

"But in getting people into work there are some big issues we have to address. Take the position of two parent families. Despite all the progress that has been made over the years, women are still paid 18% less than men at the same grade. For many couples it is economically rational for women to give up work or reduce their working hours when their first child is born."

"The solution is to invest in childcare. More nursery provision and initiatives such as Sure Start. And we need greater variety of working hours for men as well as women. And we need to challenge age discrimination. Astonishing as it may seem now but it used to be the case that you were too old to be recruited as an executive officer in the civil service at 35!"

The MP continued: "A major challenge for us here in Pendle is to increase employment in the Asian community. It means a big drive to teach English to those who have a poor grasp or no knowledge. The role of the College in reaching out to these people cannot be underestimated."

"Older women who had not been born in the UK were often limited in their ability to speak English. We need to persuade those women out of the house and into the classroom. And the men must encourage this, rather than block it."

Note to Editors: The Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit will shortly publish a study of labour market participation by ethnic minorities. Muslim men and women were least likely to be in paid work. Hindus the most likely. The preliminary report cautions that we should not assume a "religious effect" as religion may be a proxy for other factors such as education and fluency.

The report goes on: Cultural factors should be of particular consideration when investigating the labour market participation of Asian women. Evidence gathered by our project team suggests that voluntary organisations and other service providers who offer training and careers guidance often find it difficult to reach Asian women....

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 100/02 Friday 30 August 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP STEPS UP CAMPAIGN ON PEANUT ALLERGY

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is stepping up his campaign to force food manufacturers, retailers and restaurants to address the problem of food allergies - some of which are potentially fatal.

A recent study published in the British Medical Journal has shown that 1 in 200 children suffers from peanut allergy.

Speaking from his constituency office in Nelson earlier today, the MP said: "Nuts are everywhere - even in foods where you would least expect them to be. So doing a simple thing like eating out can be a real hazard for some people. I want to see proper labelling on packaging and clear indications on menus if dishes contain traces of nuts."

The MP has raised the issue with Health Minister, Yvette Cooper, quizzing her on the number of people who have died as a result of anaphylactic shock brought on by consuming food.

The Minister told the MP: "Reliable data is not available for the number of deaths associated with food allergy. This is because deaths due to allergy are often attributed on the death certificate to asthma or some other symptom rather than to actual food allergy. The committee on toxicity reported in 2000 that of about 20 deaths annually attributed to fatal anaphylactic shock, 30% (ie about seven) are due to foods, the most commonly implicated food being peanut."

The MP added: "Most allergic reactions to food are mild but some reactions can be very severe, even life threatening."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 101/02 Friday 30 August 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP SAYS WAR AGAINST IRAQ "UNJUSTIFIED"

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, will tell a meeting of the Pendle Labour Party this evening that Britain should not go to war against Iraq.

Tonight's meeting in Colne will hear the MP say that containment of the "odious" Saddam Hussein regime is the best policy. "Hussein has been kept in his cage for the last decade. He is driven by two goals: his own survival and the lifting of sanctions."

The MP will say: "Saddam Hussein is a dictator in charge of a murderous regime but, since the Gulf War, he has not committed an act of aggression against Britain or, indeed, any of his neighbours in the region. To go to war in these circumstances would be an uncertain enterprise, plunging the Middle East into chaos and with the certainty of major loss of life."

The Bishop of Burnley spoke out this week against any war with Iraq.

Note to Editors: The MP supported a Commons motion (EDM 927) on 4 March 2002 which reads: This House is aware of the deep unease among hon members on all sides of the House at the prospect that Her Majesty's Government might support United States military action against Iraq; agrees with Kofi Annan that a further military attack on Iraq would be unwise at this time; believes that such a course of action would disrupt support for the anti terrorism coalition among the Arab states; and instead urges the Prime Minister to use Britain's influence with Iraq to gain agreement that UN weapons inspections will resume.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 103/02 Thursday 26 September 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

REBEL MP SAYS NO TO WAR AGAINST IRAQ

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has re-stated his opposition to a war with Iraq. The MP was one of 53 Labour MPs (and more than 70 from all parties) who voted in the Commons this week to express their opposition to a war.

Speaking from his constituency office today following this week's emergency recall of Parliament, the MP said: "Saddam Hussein is an evil tyrant but there are lots of nasty dictators all around the world and it is not our job to be the world's policeman."

The MP continued: "The dossier produced by the Government makes gripping reading but it does not make the case for war. Saddam Hussein is neither threatening Britain nor the US and, as yet, none of his neighbours in the middle east has expressed fears of what he might do to them."

"The truth is he has been contained effectively in Iraq since the end of the Gulf War. The weapons inspectors are now going back into Iraq and the UN is the forum for discussions and decisions on what to do next."

"The United States has a formulated a new doctrine of "regime change" - even if the inspectors find nothing, Bush wants Hussein to go. The United States is also committed to the pre-emptive strike. Do that and international law flies out the window."

"Iraq today. Possibly Iran or North Korea tomorrow. Then, where next?"

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 104/02 Monday 14 October 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS FOR RAILWAY TO BE RE-OPENED

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has called on Lancashire County Council to safeguard the track bed of the old Colne to Skipton railway which closed in the mid 70s.

He says the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan - which sets out planning policies for the next decade - misses a golden opportunity by failing to protect the old track. Instead, the County and North Yorkshire County Council, joined by Pendle and Craven

District Councils, are continuing to press for a new A56 bypass. The thinking is to run the new road along the old track bed.

Speaking from his Nelson office today, the MP said: “I have big reservations about the bypass which will carve its way through a beautiful and relatively tranquil valley. It will not be a local road for local people - which is what many people in Kelbrook, Sough and Earby want. It will be a major strategic route.”

“But, if despite this, the bypass goes ahead at some point in the future, then provision should be made to run a railway alongside.”

Last February, the MP was told by Transport Minister, John Spellar, that cash could be available to investigate the feasibility of re-opening the old Colne to Skipton railway.

The MP quizzed Spellar after speaking to a packed public meeting at the Municipal Hall in Colne earlier that month where calls were made for the line to be re-opened. The MP is planning to speak to SELRAP - the group promoting the railway - at a meeting in December.

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 109/02 Wednesday 30 October 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP VOTES FOR COMMONS REFORMS

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has voted in favour of a series of reforms designed to change dramatically the way the House of Commons works.

The proposals, masterminded by Leader of the House, Robin Cook, split opinion amongst MPs. The most controversial proposal concerned sitting hours, with the Commons now finishing its business at 7pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Speaking from Westminster, the Pendle MP said: “The Parliamentary day has been pulled forward three hours. Instead of starting at 2.30pm and going on to 10pm we shall now start at 11.30am with Parliament helping to set the news agenda for the day.”

“The other proposals which were carried will mean the Commons sitting in September. However, there are concerns - some perfectly valid - about how we squeeze everything into the new Parliamentary day. Select and Standing Committees will still have to sit during the day - but perhaps starting earlier at 9.30am.”

“I discovered from the debate yesterday that the Commons used to sit during the day until the invention of gaslight! Before then MPs couldn’t see enough by candlelight to conduct their debates.”

“Public perception of Parliament is important. A lot of people think Westminster is a bit of a museum with weird and wonderful working practices. It should be the beating heart of our democracy.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 107/02 Wednesday 23 October 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP CALLS ON FIREFIGHTERS TO THINK AGAIN

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, has called on the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to call off its proposed strike action and participate in the independent review, chaired by Sir George Bains, into the pay and conditions of firefighters.

Speaking from Westminster, the MP said: “We all pay tribute to the bravery and dedication and professionalism of our firefighters. They should get a fair wage for the vitally important work they do. I agree.”

“But I also want the FBU to participate fully in the Bains review which will look not just at pay but at other terms and conditions. The last time this happened was in the 1970s so a review is long overdue.”

“There can be no justification for a strike in these circumstances.”

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 111/02 Wednesday 30 October 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MPs BACK NEW DRIVE FOR BETTER HOUSING

Pendle MP, Gordon Prentice, will be joining MPs from the other East Lancashire constituencies at a meeting this Friday (1 November) in Burnley Town Hall to discuss plans to bring extra cash for housing into the area.

The Government has already identified East Lancashire as one of nine new "pathfinder" areas in England which will get extra money to help tackle the problem of poor housing where the market has, in many cases, collapsed.

The MP said: "A quarter of East Lancashire housing is unfit for habitation compared with only 7% in England. A similar proportion is in disrepair. Here is East Lancashire we have five of the thirty worst wards in the country. We know what the problem is. We need the resources to help us tackle the terrible blight that afflicts so many run down areas."

"A lot of hopes are being pinned on this new initiative."

Contact: pager 07644 005297 or 01282 695471 (constituency); 0207 219 4011 (Commons) or mobile 0770 357 0944

News from Gordon Prentice MP

Member of Parliament for Pendle

For Immediate Release. No 112/02 Wednesday 30 October 2002
www.gordonprenticemp.com

MP TO GET GRILLING FROM PENDLE YOUNG PEOPLE

Local MP, Gordon Prentice, is to be quizzed by Pendle young people at a meeting this Thursday evening(31 October) at the Brierfield Community Centre.

The meeting has been organised by the Pendle District Youth Council.

Speaking before the meeting, the MP said: “I am looking forward to this immensely though I’m pretty sure I’m going to get a real grilling.”

“Young people are interested in the future of Pendle. They want to know where the good jobs are coming from. They have concerns about the lack of leisure facilities. And they want to be involved in decisions which affect them.”

The MP added: “Despite rumours to the contrary, I was a young person once! It’s a receding memory but I can recall speaking out on all sorts of things.”

“It’s good that young people have a voice and make their views known. I generally find they have interesting things to say.”

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